SAKURA TAISEN
3
TOKYOPOP
ART BY IKKU MASA • ORIGINAL CHARACTERS BY KOSUKE FUJISHIMA
STORY BY OHJI HIROI

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TOKYOPOP®

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SAKURA TAISEN™

Manga
Action/Romance
US $9.99
CAN $12.99

The action heats up both on stage and on the streets of Tokyo. Sakura's first starring role in the theater is a complete disaster, but fortunately she can still hold more than her own on the battlefield! Demon invaders and sinister forces provide quite a challenge for our talented troupe, but it's nothing that a little teamwork and fighting spirit can't handle. Plus there's always time for a little romantic intermission. Love may be blossoming on the battlefield, despite all the odds!

SAKURA TAISEN™

Vol. 3

Story By
Ohji Hiroi

Art by
Ikku Masa

Characters by
Kosuke Fujishima

Sakura Taisen Manga Version
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サクラ大戦

Sakura Wars

Manga Version

3

Sakura Taisen Vol. 3

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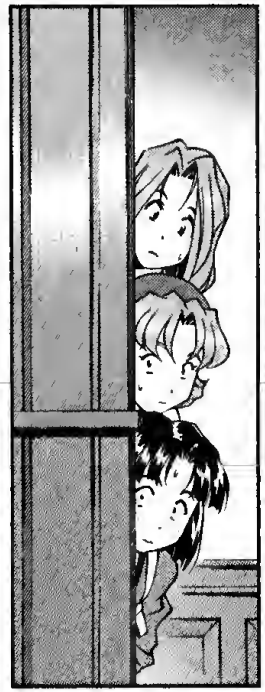
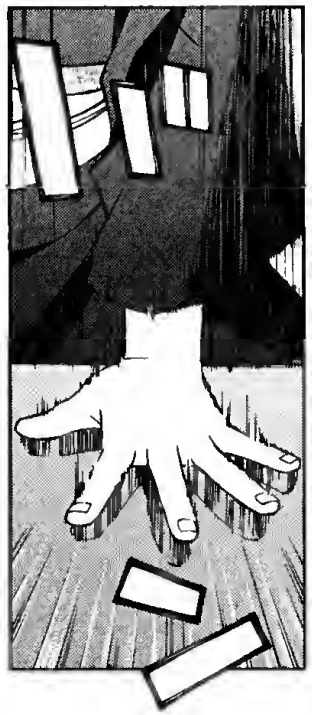
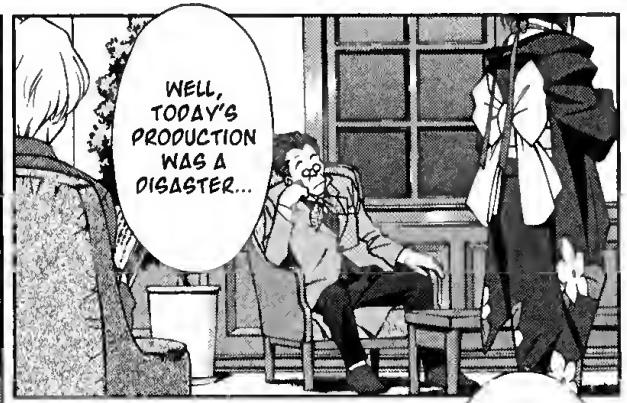
SA-SAKURA-SAN!!
AND, PRAY TELL, HOW...
...DO YOU INTEND TO REMEDY THE SITUA-TION?!

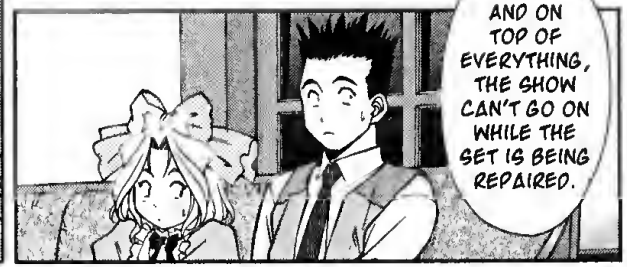
...WE WOULDN'T NEED THE POLICE!!
IF "SORRY" WERE GOOD ENOUGH...

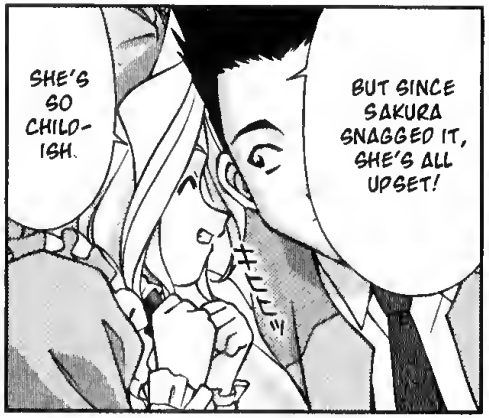
I...
I'M SORRY...

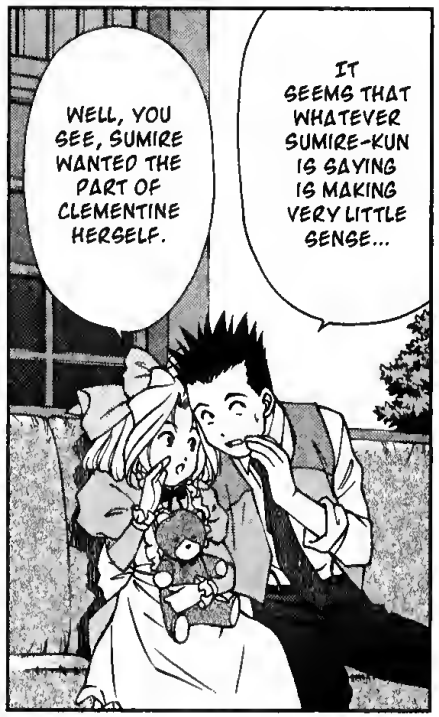


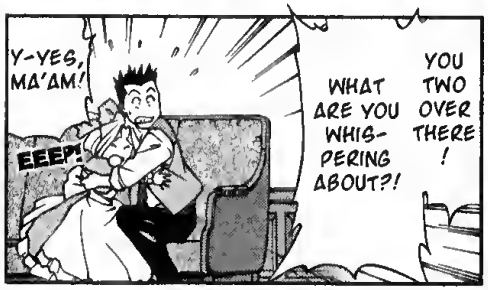



WELL, TODAY'S PRODUCTION WAS A DISASTER...


AND ON TOP OF EVERYTHING, THE SHOW CAN'T GO ON WHILE THE SET IS BEING REPAIRED.


SHE'S SO CHILD-ISH.
BUT SINCE SAKURA SNAGGED IT, SHE'S ALL UPSET!


WELL, YOU SEE, SUMIRE WANTED THE PART OF CLEMENTINE HERSELF.
IT SEEMS THAT WHATEVER SUMIRE-KUN IS SAYING IS MAKING VERY LITTLE SENSE...


Y-YES, MA'AM!
EEEP!
WHAT ARE YOU WHIS-PERING ABOUT?!
YOU TWO OVER THERE!

UNDER-STOOD?!
REGARD-LESS!
SINCE SAKURA-SAN SINGLE-HANDEDLY DESTROYED THE STAGE, IT SHOULD BE REPAIRED SINGLE-HANDEDLY BY SAKURA-SAN.

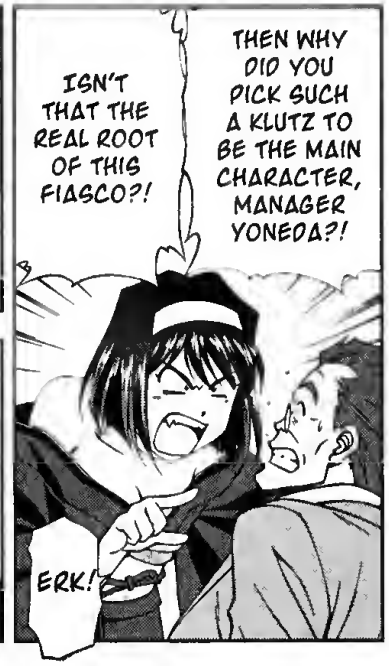
IN-ADVER-TENTLY, YOU SAY?

COME ON, SUMIRE. LET IT GO.
THAT'S RIGHT. A LOT OF PEOPLE TRIP INADVER-TENTLY.

YOU NEEDN'T BE SO HARD ON SAKURA.
UNFORESEEN ACCIDENTS OFTEN HAPPEN ON STAGE.

GIVING A BIG PART TO A BEGINNER LIKE SAKURA STRENGTHENS HER REIRYOKU AND...
W-WELL, YOU SEE...

UH... HUH...
COME ON, OGAMI, HELP ME OUT HERE, WILL YOU!
WELL, IT'LL HELP WITH FUTURE BATTLES WITH THE KURONOSU COUNCIL AND...


ISN'T THAT THE REAL ROOT OF THIS FIASCO?!
THEN WHY DID YOU PICK SUCH A KLUTZ TO BE THE MAIN CHARACTER, MANAGER YONEDA?!
ERK!

NOBODY THINKS IT'S YOUR FAULT.
AW, HON! DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!

I'M REALLY, REALLY SORRY.
I WILL DO MY BEST NOT TO REPEAT SUCH A TERRIBLE MISTAKE IN THE FUTURE...

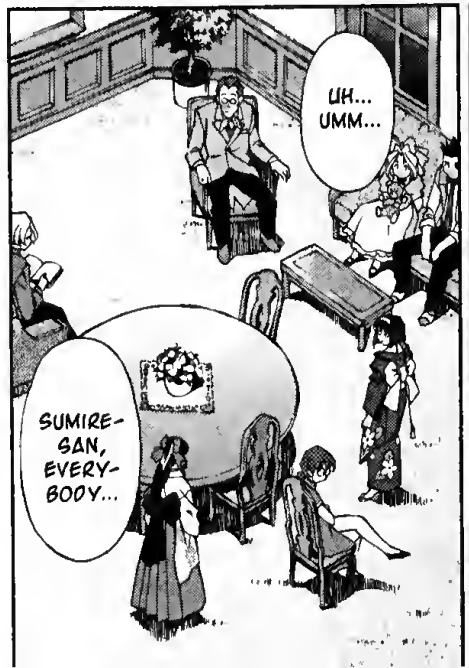
YOU SHOULD TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOUR TWISTED ANKLE, SAKURA.
OH, YES.
THANK YOU SO MUCH.
THE SHOW MUST GO ON, AS THEY SAY.

HUMPH!
NO MATTER WHAT THE OTHERS THINK...
...I SHALL NEVER FORGIVE YOU!

.....

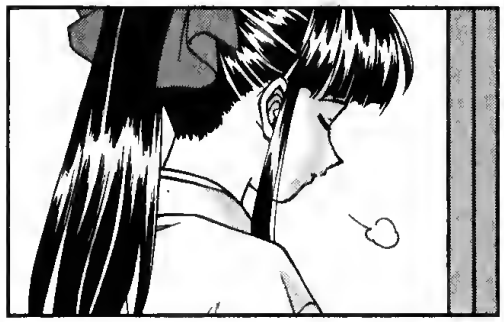
HEH HEH HEH!
THE MASTER SAID HE WAS GOING TO COMMIT RITUAL SUICIDE...
THAT WAS KIND OF AMUSING.
...I THINK PART OF THE BLAME HAS TO GO TO THE BACKSTAGE CREW.
YOU'RE RIGHT. THE MASTER WAS HERE TO APOLOGIZE EARLIER, BUT...

DON'T BE SILLY, SUMIRE-HAN.
BESIDES, IT'S NOT SAKURA-HAN'S FAULT THAT THE STAGE GOT DESTROYED.
IT WAS BECAUSE OF UNDER-SIZED POSTS AND POOR ANCHORING.


UH... UMM...
SUMIRE-SAN, EVERY-BODY...

B-BUT!
IF SAKURA-SAN HADN'T TRIPPED IN THE FIRST PLACE, THIS CATASTROPHE WOULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED!

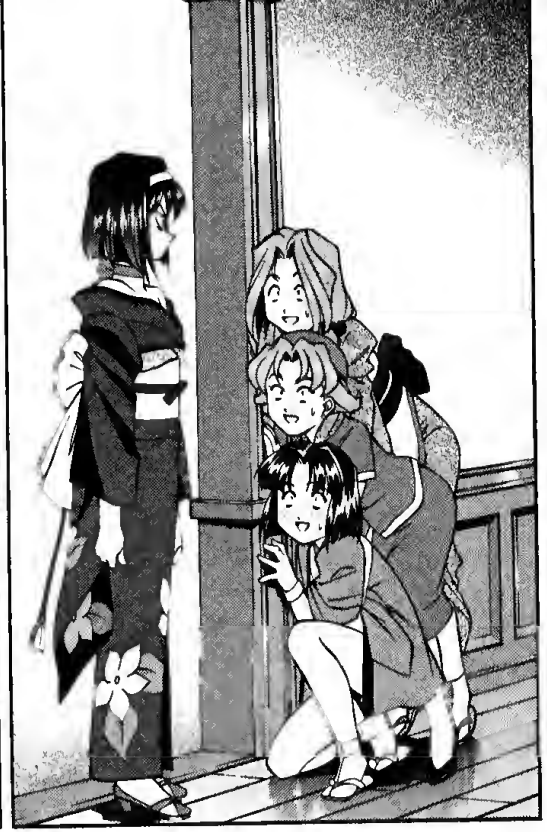
OKAY.
TRY TO GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP.
AND SAKURA, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT TOO MUCH.

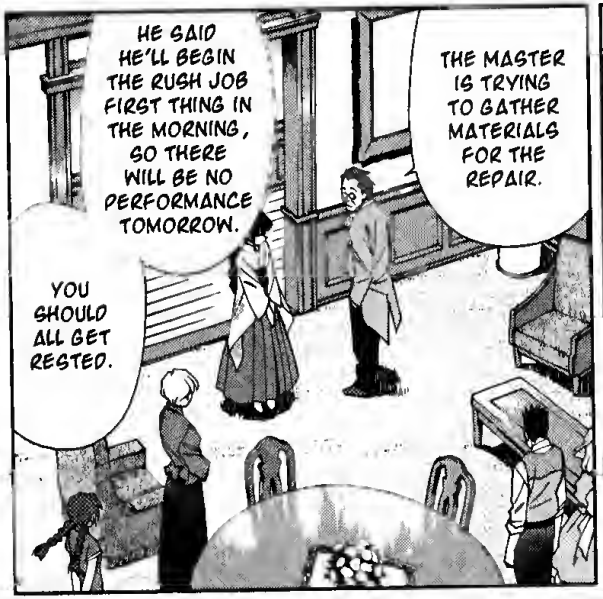


SHALL I SEE YOU UP TO YOUR ROOM, SAKURA-KUN?
N-NO, THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
GOOD NIGHT, EVERY-ONE.

.....

KAAA!
WHAT ON EARTH DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!



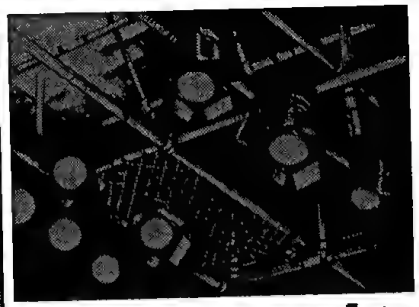

HE SAID HE'LL BEGIN THE RUSH JOB FIRST THING IN THE MORNING, SO THERE WILL BE NO PERFORMANCE TOMORROW.
THE MASTER IS TRYING TO GATHER MATERIALS FOR THE REPAIR.
YOU SHOULD ALL GET RESTED.

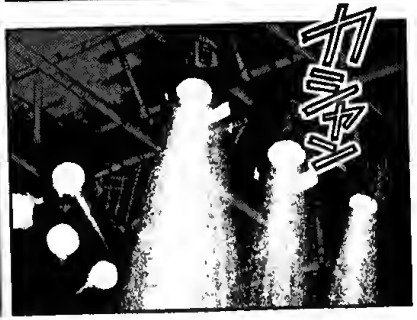
BOY OH BOY...
SUMIRE'S TEMPER IS SOMETHING ELSE.

LET'S SEE...
WHERE TO BEGIN...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP SO LATE?!
SA-KURA-KUN...
WHAT ABOUT YOU, OGAMI-SAN?

HUH?




カシャ

JUST DO BETTER THE NEXT TIME.

I'M SUCH AN UNBELIEV-ABLE KLUTZ...
THAT WAS MY VERY FIRST BIG PART.
BOY ...

I'LL GUARANTEE IT MYSELF.
I BET YOUR NEXT PERFOR-MANCE WILL BE A SMASH.

I JUST KNOW.

YOU'RE NOT GOD OR ANYTHING, SO HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE?
AW, OGAMI-SAN...

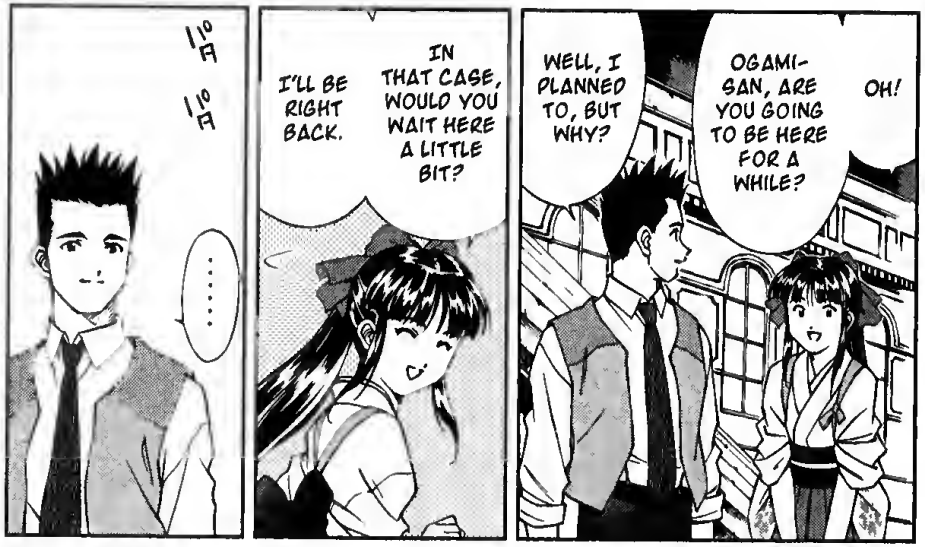
I SEE...
SO YOU CAME HERE THINKING THE SAME THING AS I DID.
YES...
WELL, IT'S MY FAULT THAT ALL OF THIS HAPPENED...
SO I WANTED TO SEE IF THERE WAS ANYTHING I COULD DO...

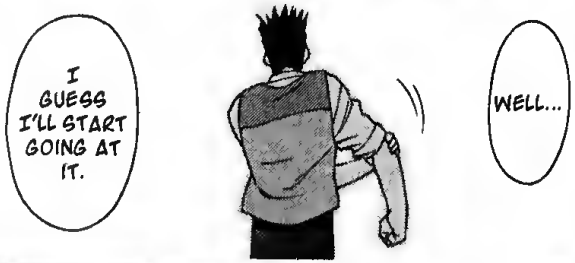
SIGH!

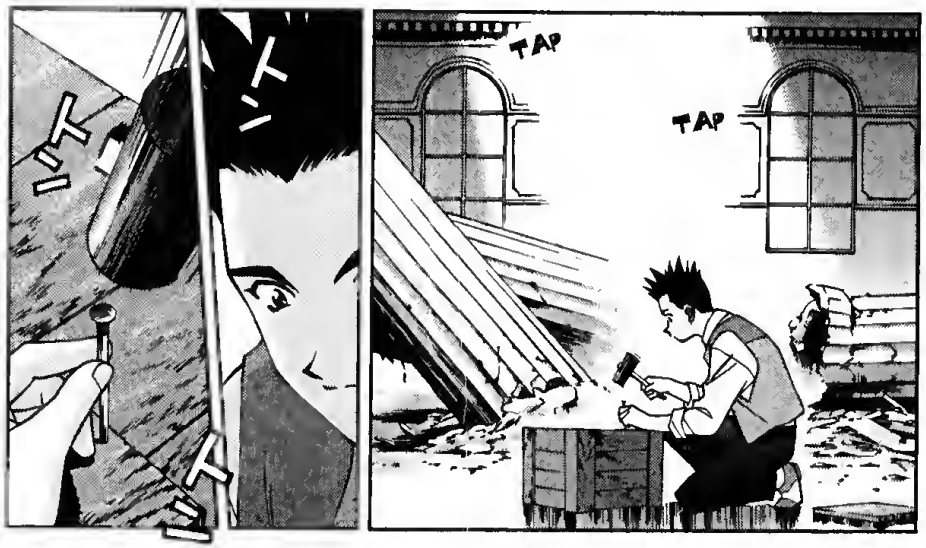
.....

I SUP-POSE SO, THEN!
I'M STARTING TO FEEL THE SAME WAY.
HEH HEH!

YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT, ENSIGN OGAMI!
RIGHT.
A BLUE SAKURA-KUN JUST ISN'T YOU AT ALL!
COME ON.

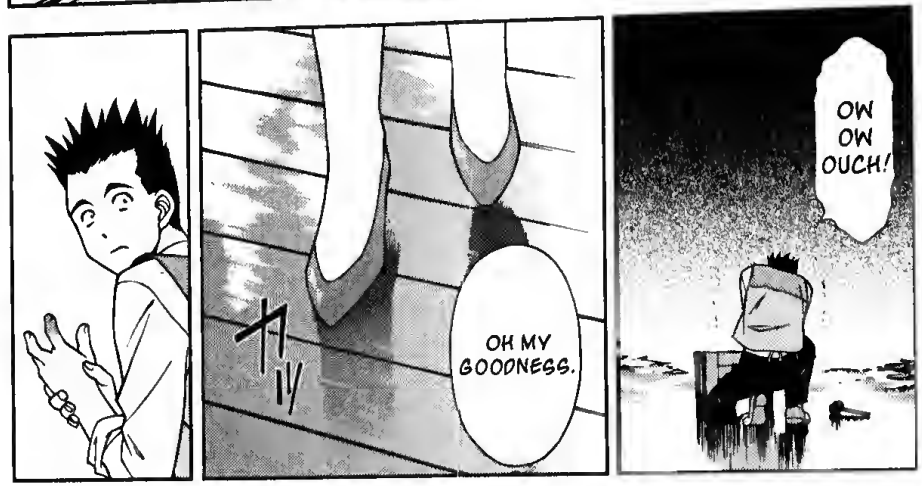

OH!
OGAMI-SAN, ARE YOU GOING TO BE HERE FOR A WHILE?
WELL, I PLANNED TO, BUT WHY?
IN THAT CASE, WOULD YOU WAIT HERE A LITTLE BIT?
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
……


WELL...
I GUESS I'LL START GOING AT IT.


TAP
TAP

YOU HURT YOURSELF, DIDN'T YOU?
LET ME SEE.
AH...!

ARRRGH!


OH MY GOODNESS.
OW OW OUCH!

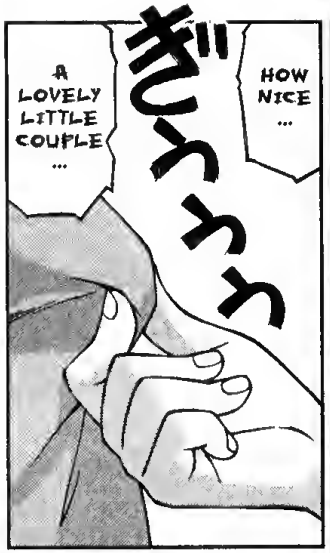
A LITTLE CHARM TO HEAL YOUR WOUND.
THERE, THAT SHOULD DO IT.
WHO ARE YOU?
AH...

.....

JUST CALL ME THE MYSTERIOUS OLDER WOMAN!
FU FU FU FU!

ERK!
ぎゃへ

YOU LOOKED LIKE YOU WERE ENJOYING YOURSELF
SA... SAKURA-KUN...!
HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN THERE?!

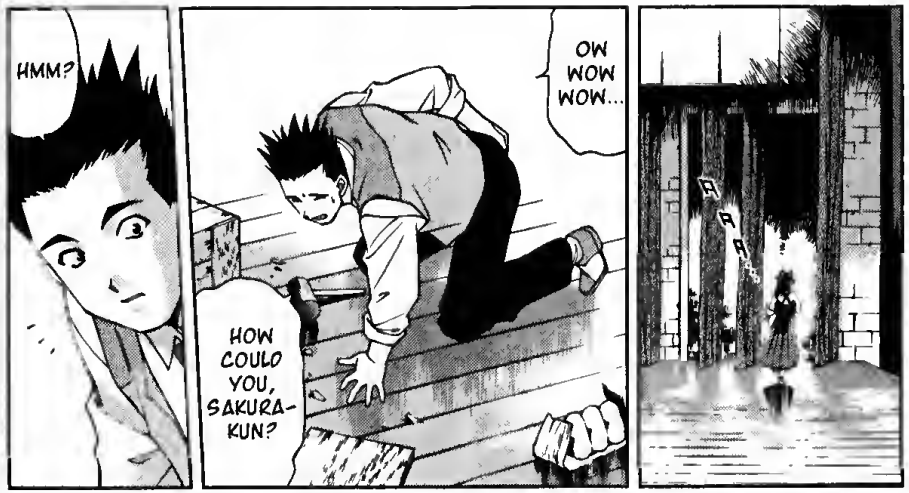

HOW NICE ...
ぎゅっ
A LOVELY LITTLE COUPLE ...

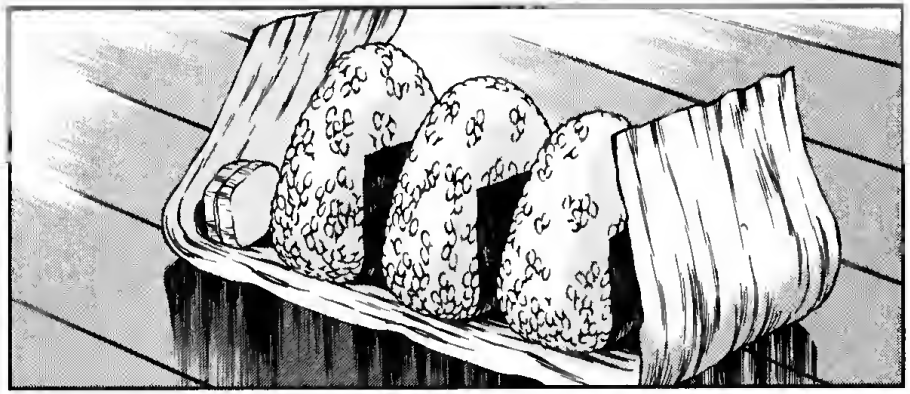
ERK!
THAT HURTS, SAKURA-KUN...

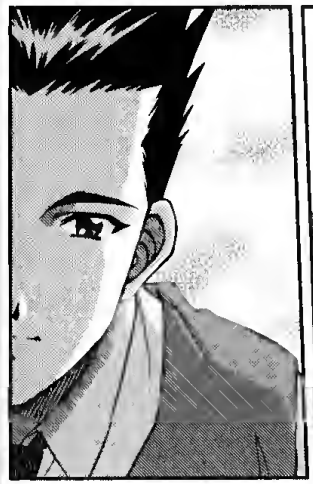
.....

HUMPH!
YOU CAN DO AS YOU PLEASE, OGAMI-SAN!
DOWAH!

After the Turmoil – End of Act







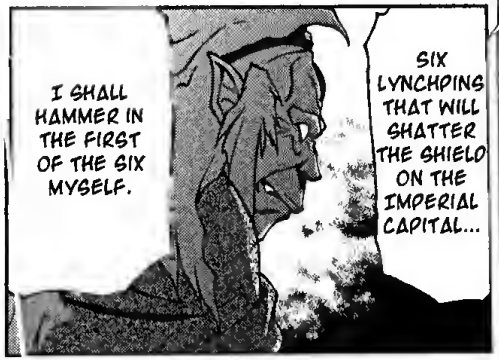
親 方 & 広 井 & さ く ら

The Master & Hiroi & Sakura

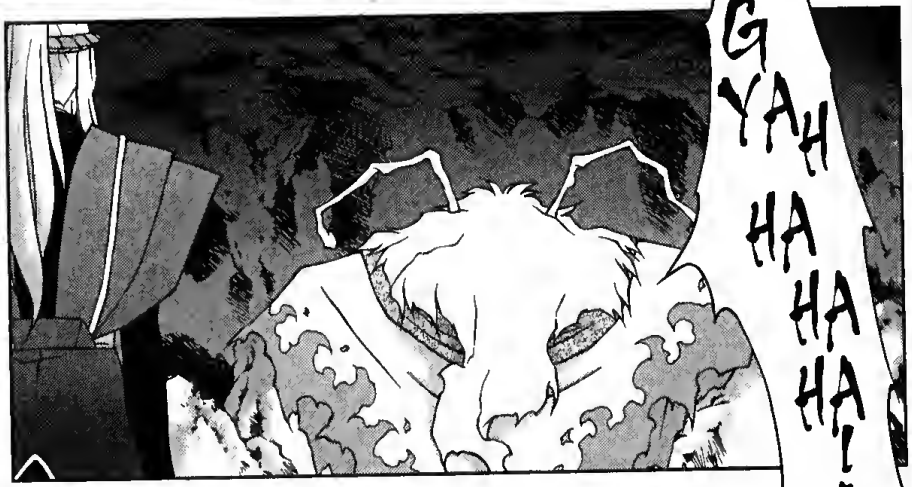
AYE.
IT'S READY.

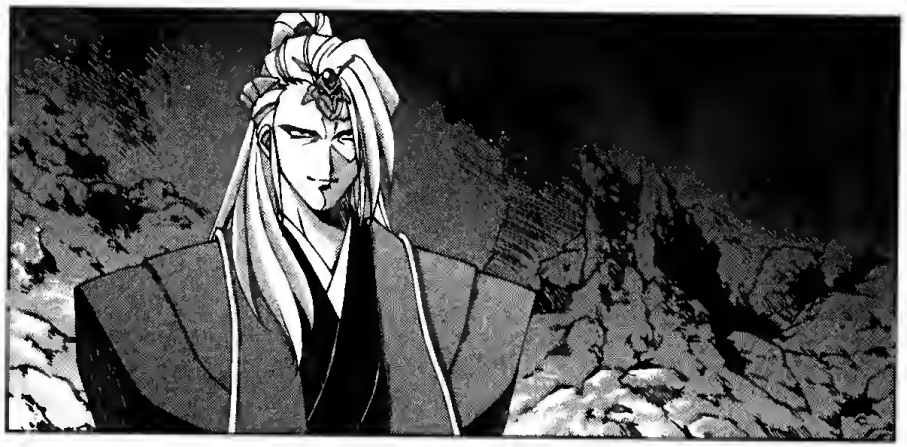
SATAN!
IS THE REPLICA OF "KUSABI" READY?!

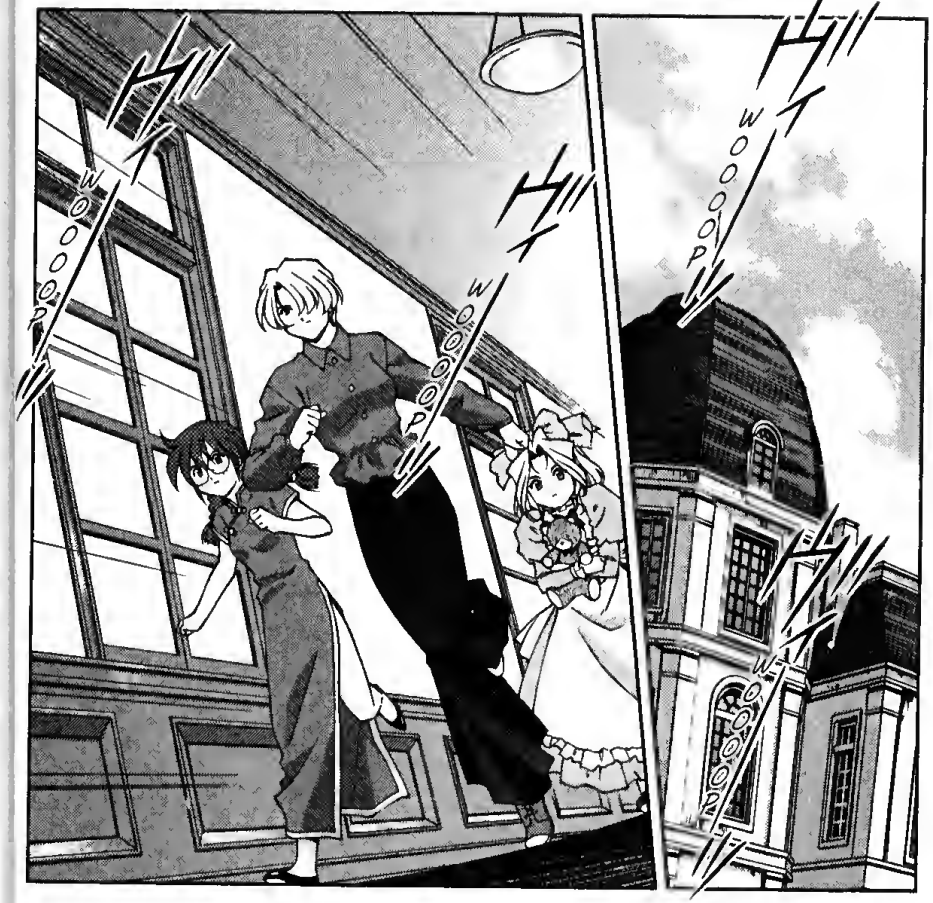
IM-PERIAL CAPITAL TOKYO...
THE CITY I CREATED THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO WITH MY OWN BLOOD...
...WAS NOT MEANT TO BE A CAPITAL FOR THE IGNORANT MASSES!!


I SHALL HAMMER IN THE FIRST OF THE SIX MYSELF.
SIX LYNCHPINS THAT WILL SHATTER THE SHIELD ON THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL...

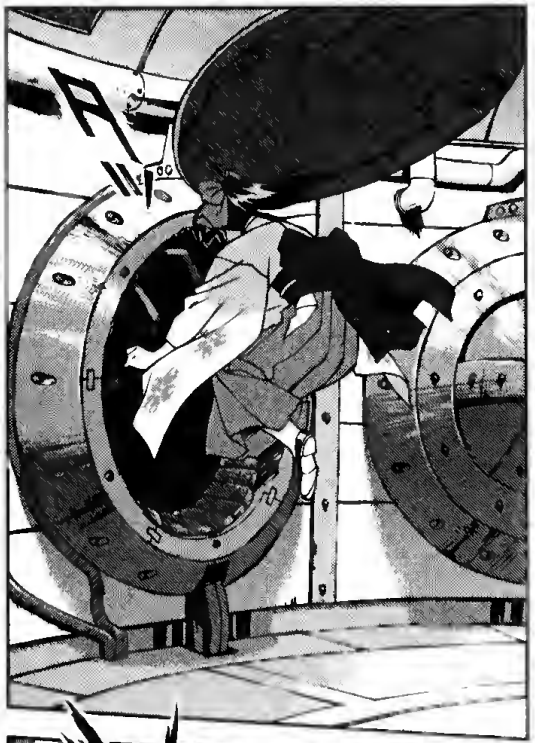
THIS LAND SHALL ONCE AGAIN KNEEL TO THE GREAT PRIEST TENKAI.
HOH HOH HOH HOH...


GYAH HA HA HA!



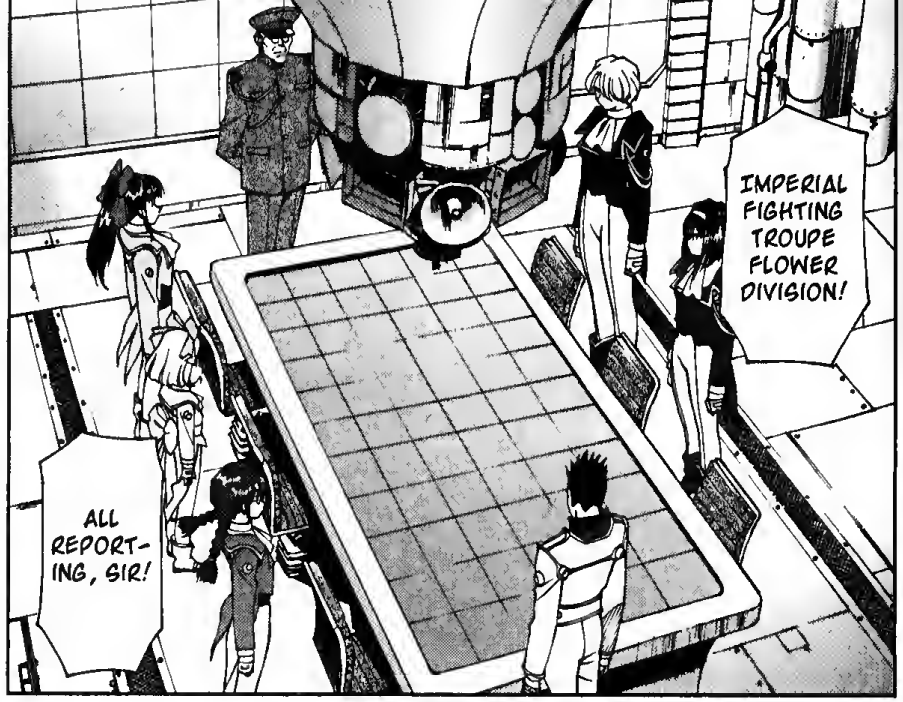

WOOOOOP
WOOOOOP
WOOOOOP

!
GOOD MORNING, SUMIRE-SAN!



I'M GOING AHEAD!
TSUTSUTSUTSU

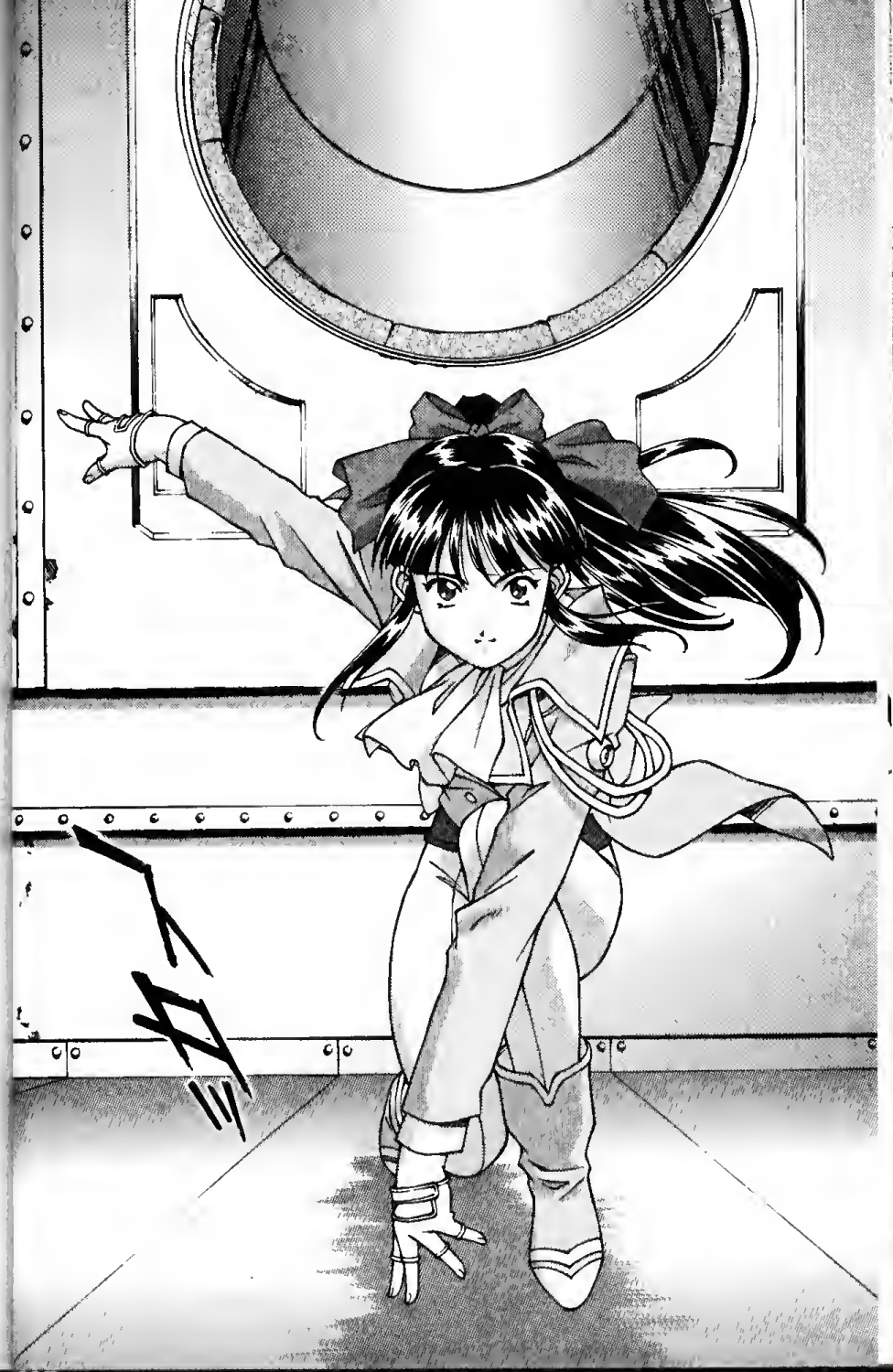
.....
WHAT ON EARTH...?


ALL REPORTING, SIR!
IMPERIAL FIGHTING TROUPE FLOWER DIVISION!

IMPERIAL CAPITAL TOWER RELAYS AND TRANSMITS ALL RADIO COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE CITY.
INDEED.
ITS DESTRUCTION WOULD THROW THE CAPITAL INTO CHAOS!
YOU MUST LEAVE IMMEDIATELY!

WE HAVE RECEIVED INTELLIGENCE THAT SPIRIT-OPERATED SOLDIERS HAVE BEEN SPOTTED IN SHIBA PARK.

SHIBA PARK...
ISN'T THAT WHERE THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL TOWER WAS BUILT?

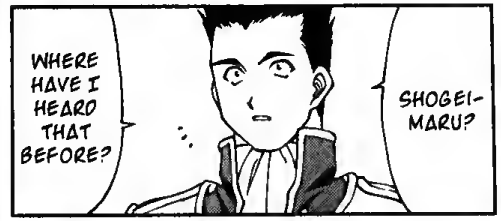


OUR TARGET IS...
SHIBA PARK!!
IMPERIAL FIGHTING TROUPE...
GO FORTH!

Sensouji
Asakusa

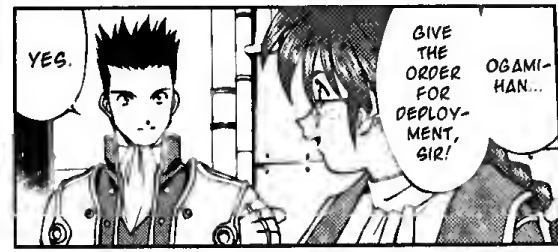
WE SHALL BE DEPLOYED ABOARD SHOGEI-MARU THIS TIME.
DON'T WORRY.

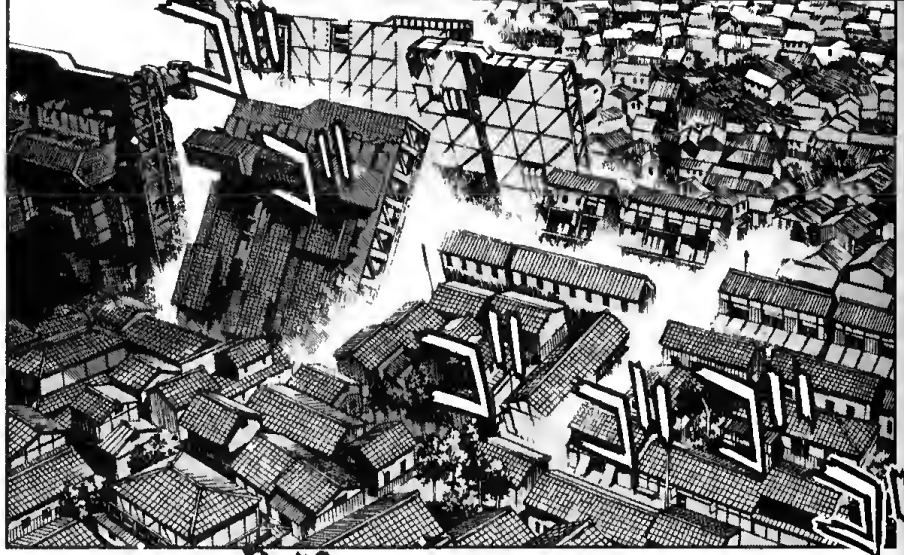
WE WON'T MAKE IT ON TIME IN OUR KOUBU...
BUT SIR...
SHIBA PARK IS NOT ON GORAI'S ROUTE.

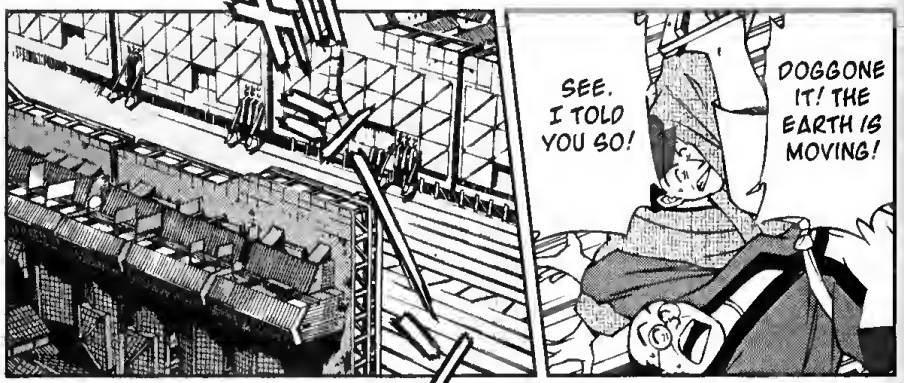

WHERE HAVE I HEARD THAT BEFORE?
SHOGEI-MARU?

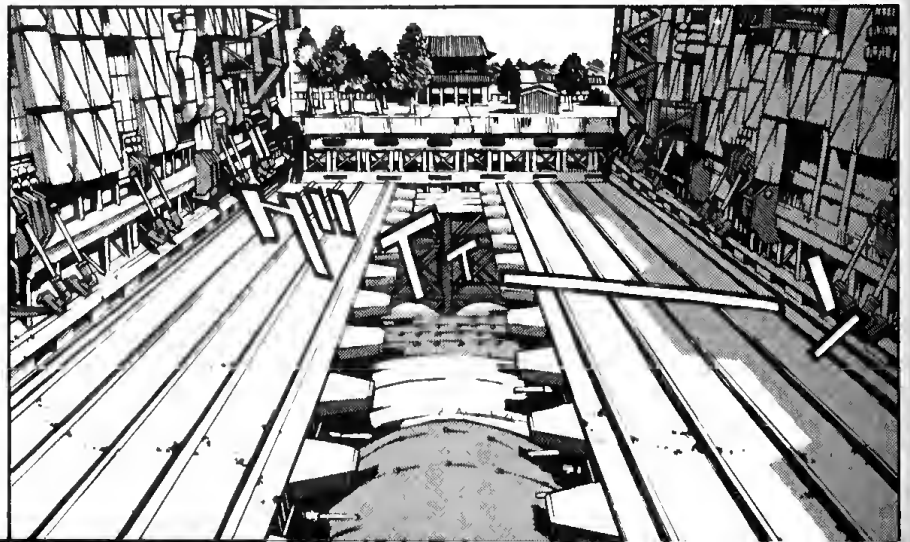
ME AND SHOGEI-MARU LEAVING TOGETHER ON OUR VERY FIRST MISSION!
HEH HEH HEH!
HOW EXCIT-ING IS THAT?!

KOHRAN WAS WORKING ON IT UNTIL RECENTLY.
IT'S A LARGE AIRSHIP THAT CAN CARRY KOUBU.


YES.
GIVE THE ORDER FOR DEPLOY-MENT, SIR!
OGAMI-HAN...



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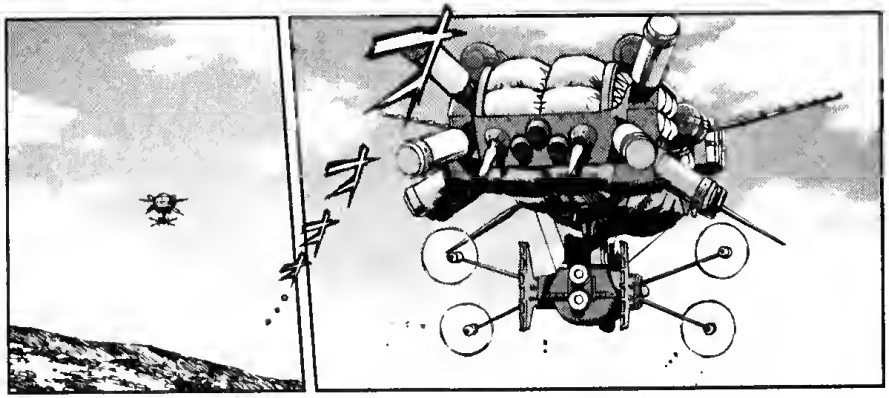
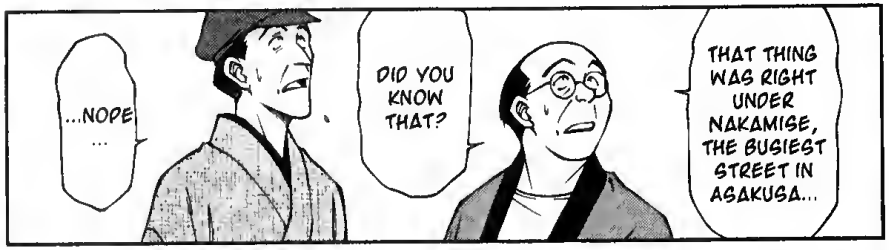
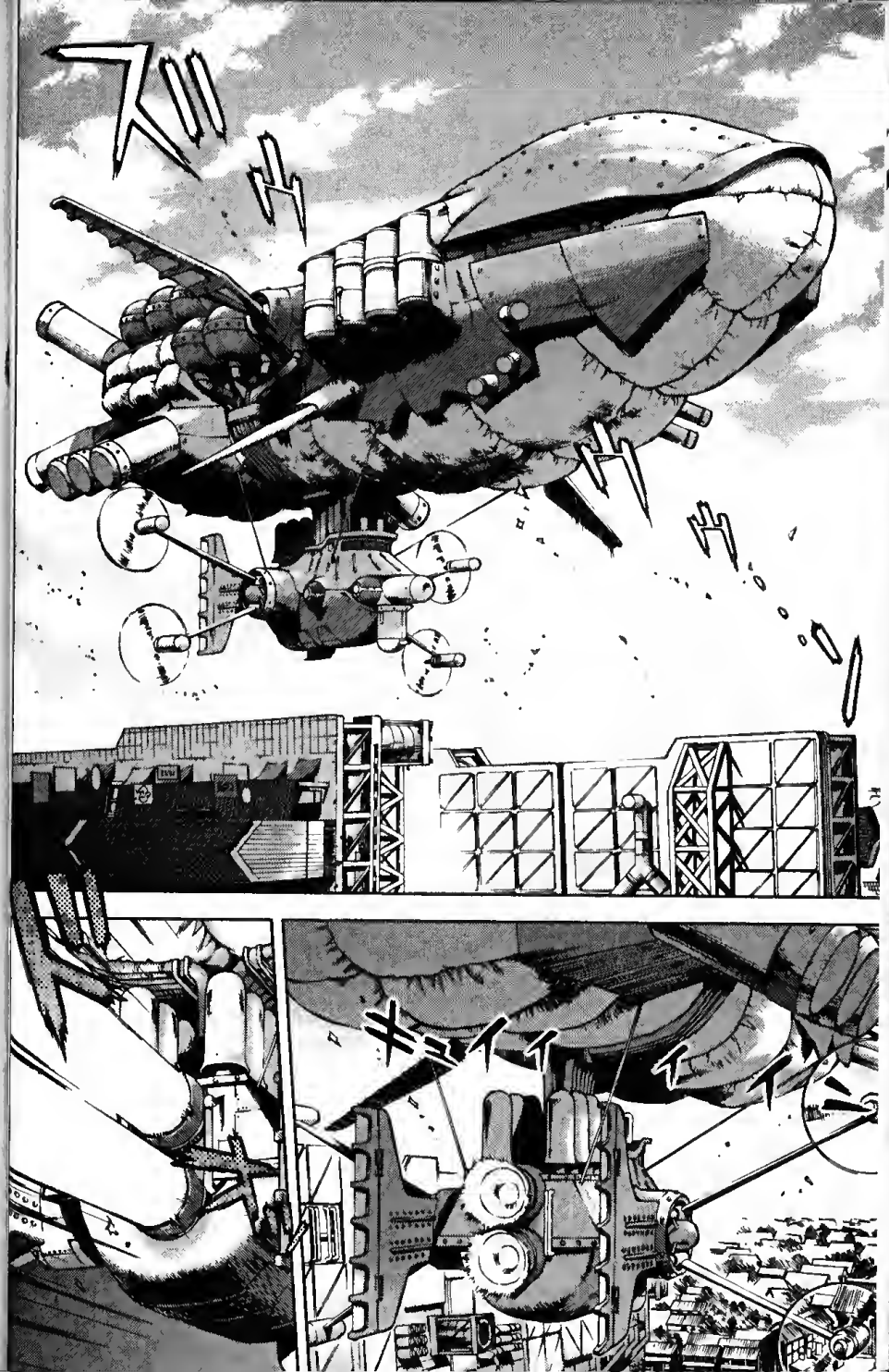



...NOPE
...
DID YOU KNOW THAT?
THAT THING WAS RIGHT UNDER NAKAMISE, THE BUSIEST STREET IN ASAKUSA...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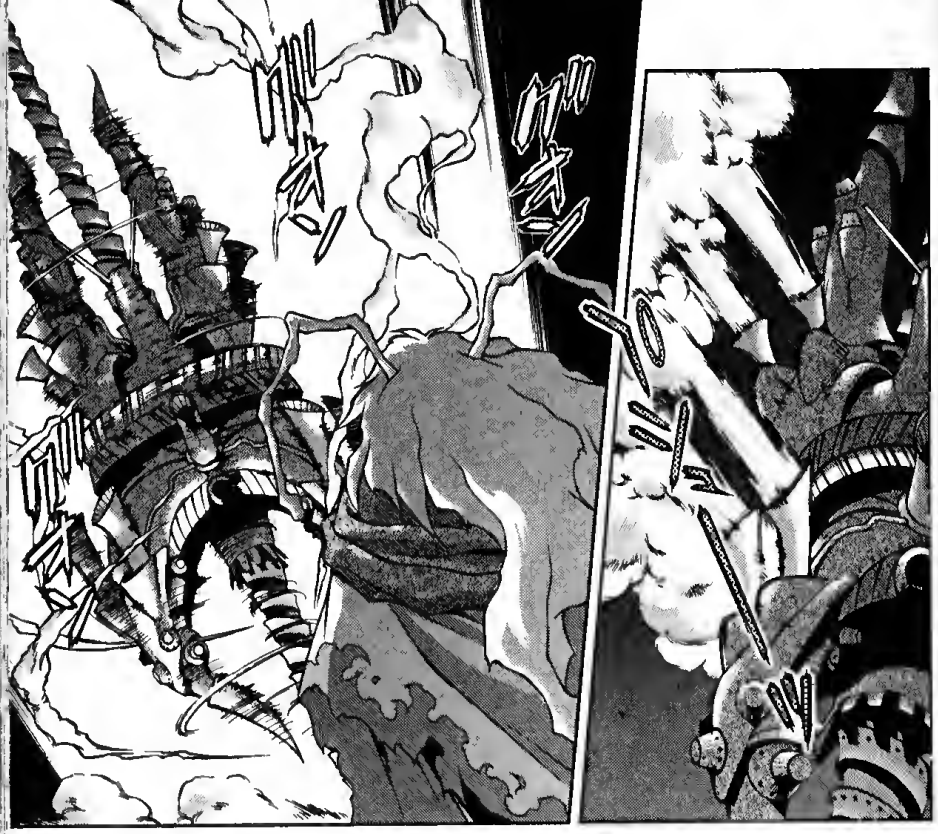
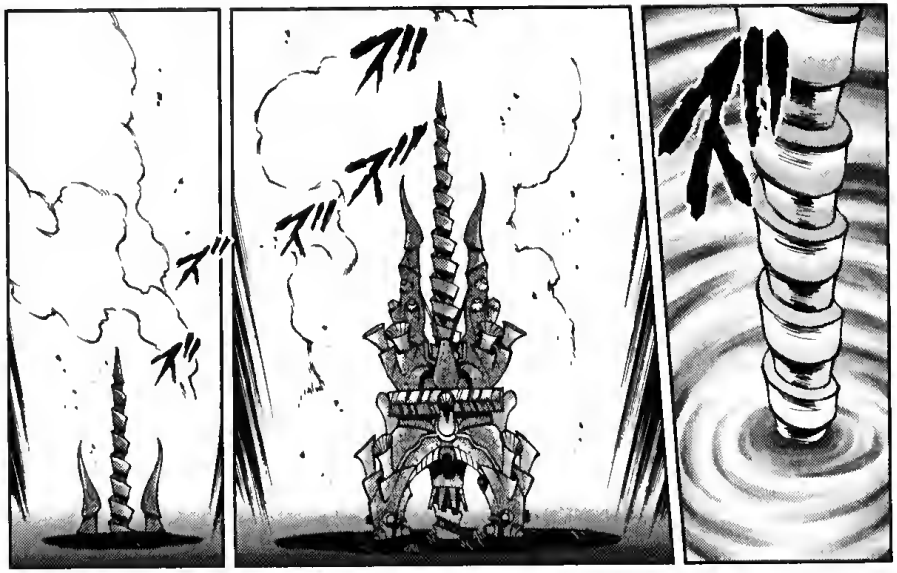
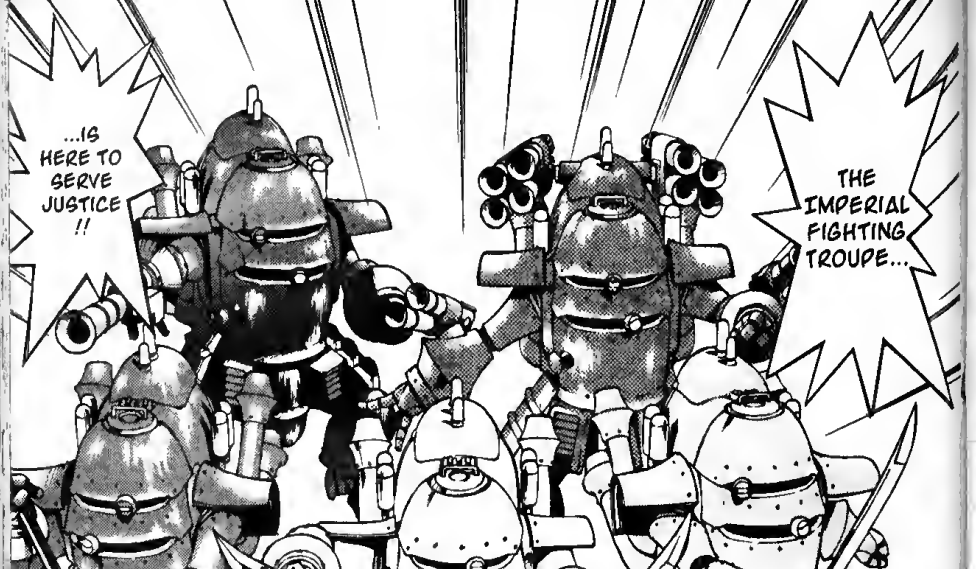


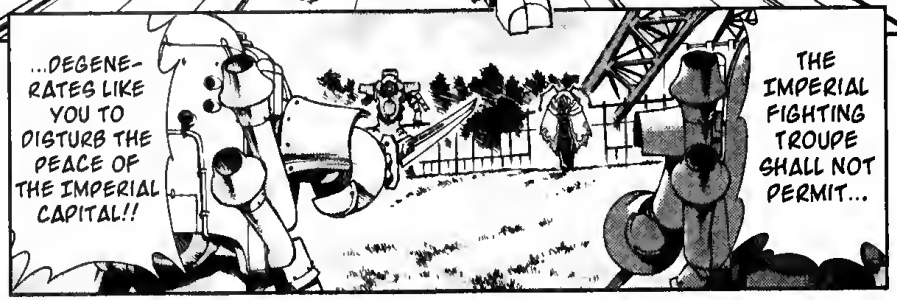


Shiba
Ward
•
Shiba
Park

ONKI-
RIKIRI
BASARA
UNBAT-
TAH...
ONKI-
RIKIRI
BASARA
UNBAT-
TAH...

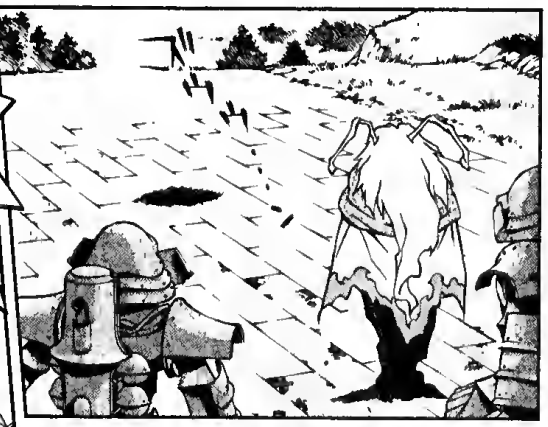
MON
!!


...IS HERE TO SERVE JUSTICE !!
THE IMPERIAL FIGHTING TROUPE...

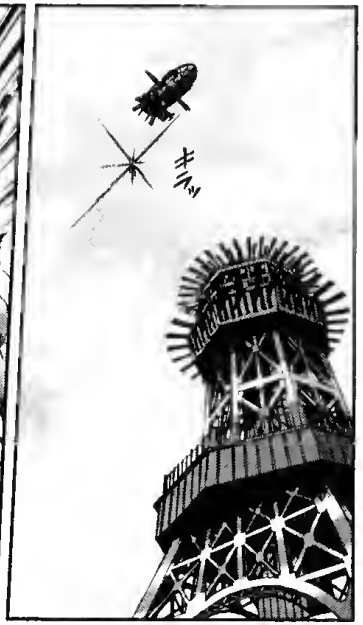

...DEGENERATES LIKE YOU TO DISTURB THE PEACE OF THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL!!
THE IMPERIAL FIGHTING TROUPE SHALL NOT PERMIT...

SO YOU ARE THE ONES SATAN SPOKE OF.
IM-PERIAL FIGHT-ING TROUPE ?

HALT!!
HUH?!



HUH HUH HUH HUH!
I HAVE SEEN THE GATES OF THE DEMON CITY...



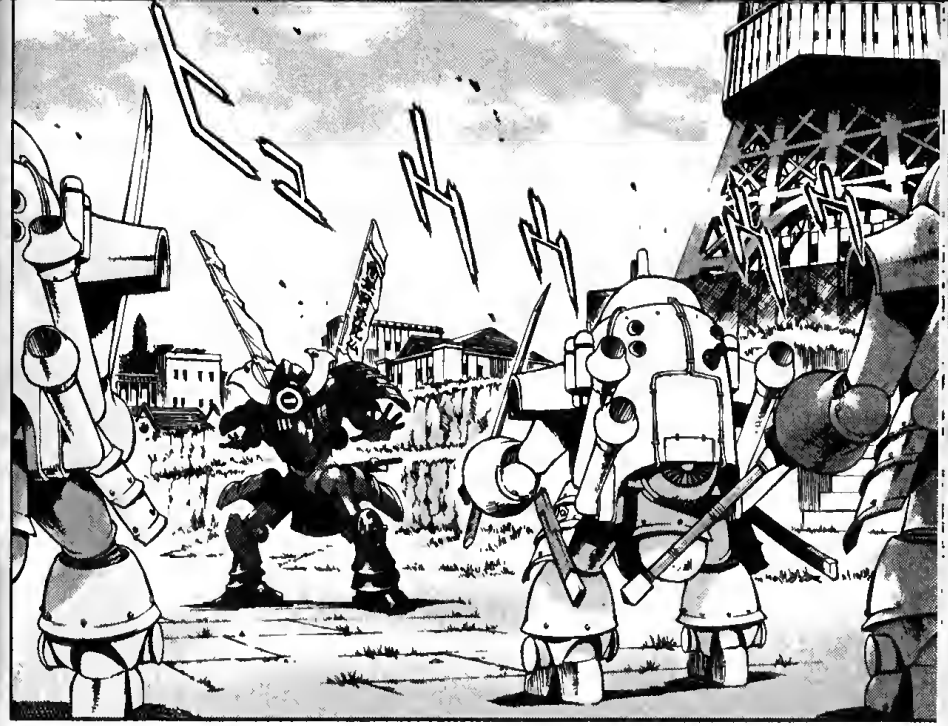
TO THINK THAT WOODEN PUPPETS LIKE YOU SHOULD ATTEMPT TO OPPOSE ME!!
YOU'RE DANGEROUSLY OUT OF YOUR LEAGUE!!!
GYAHHAHAHA!
HEY!

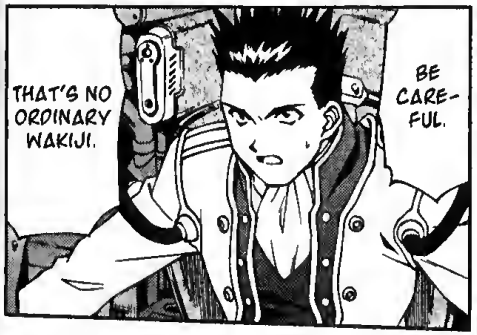
OGAMI-HAN!
I'LL NAIL THAT ONE MYSELF!!
GOT HIM!!
WHOOSH

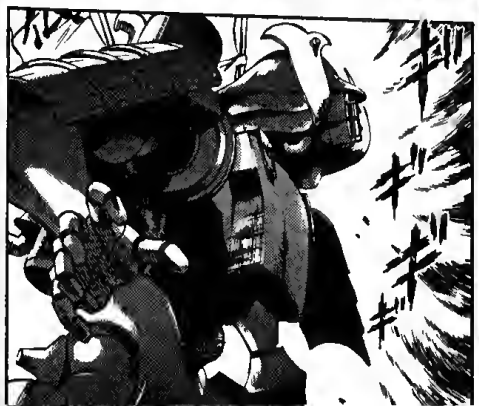
Take Off! Shogei-maru – End of Act

I HAVE ALREADY FUL-FILLED MY GOAL!
HUH HUH HUH ... BWAH HA HA HA!!
ENJOY PLAYING WITH THOSE TIN TOYS!
I FEEL A VERY STRONG EVIL AURA!
ON YOUR TOES, EVERY-ONE.

!?
チョーン
Hop
WH...
WHAT THE...?
チョーン
Hop
チョーン
Hop
チョーン
Hop




THAT'S NO ORDINARY WAKIJI.
BE CARE-FUL.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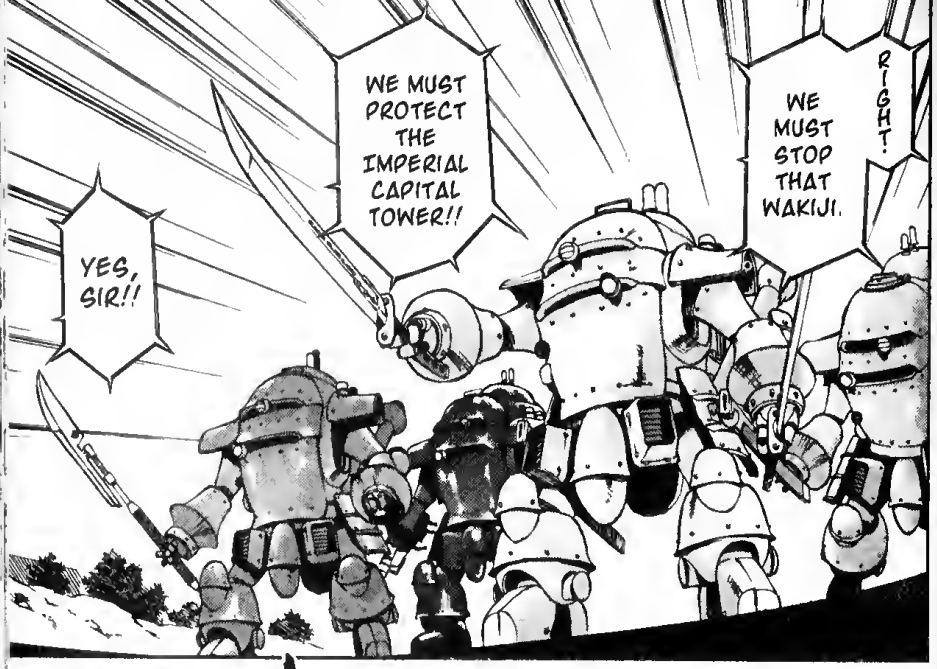
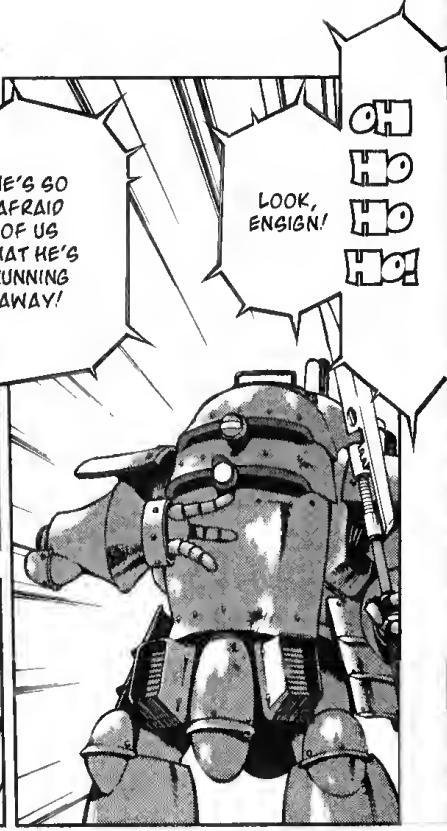
南無阿弥陀仏
ハラ


WE MUST PROTECT THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL TOWER!!
WE MUST STOP THAT WAKIJI.
RIGHT!
YES, SIR!!

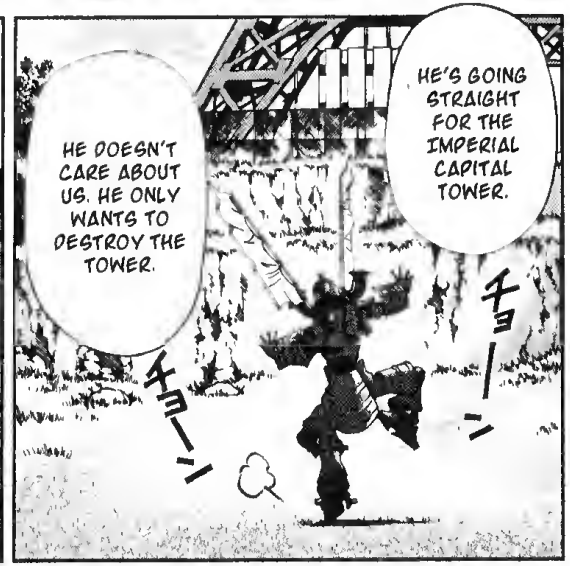
DAMN! HERE COME MORE!
?!

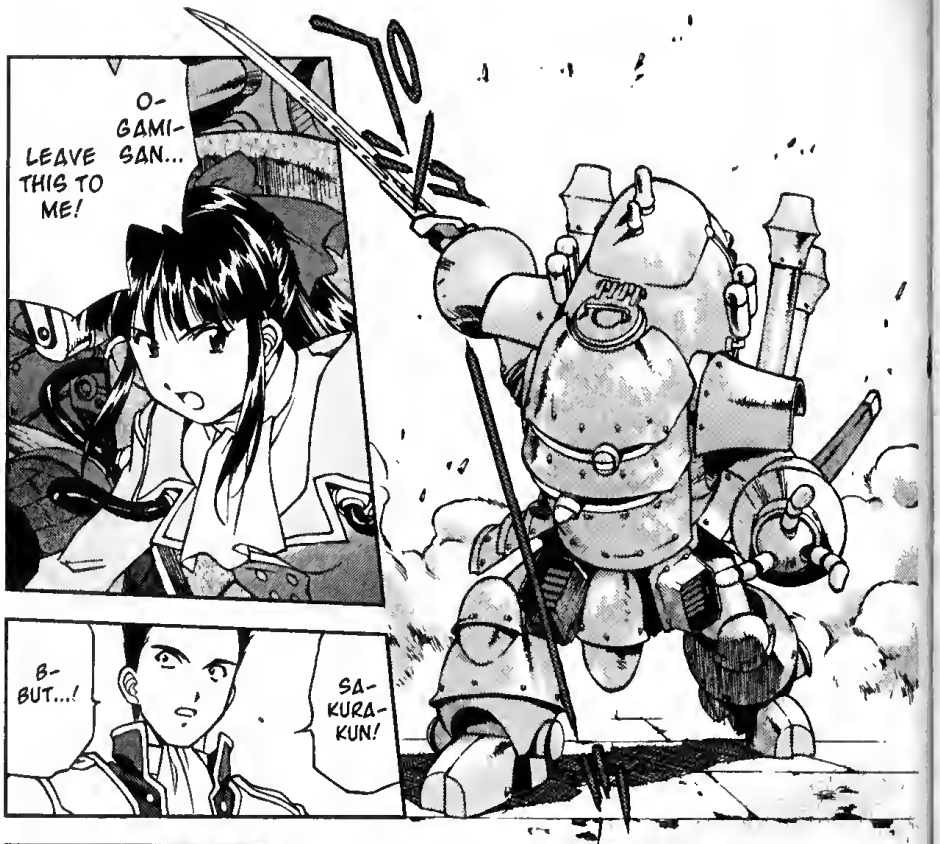
HE MAY LOOK MIGHTY, BUT HE IS ONLY A STUPID WAKIJI IN THE END!
I SUPPOSE APPEAR-ANCES ARE DECEIVING!

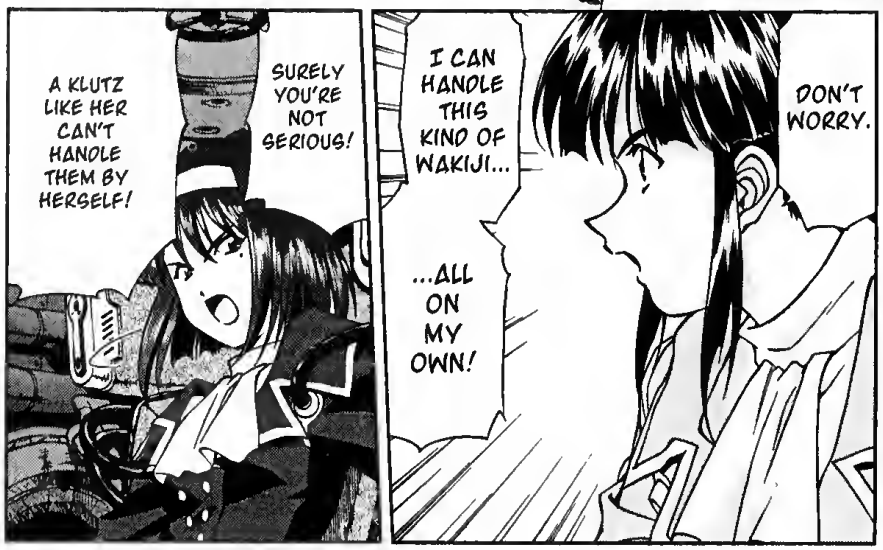

HE'S SO AFRAID OF US THAT HE'S RUNNING AWAY!
LOOK, ENSIGN!
OH HO HO HO!

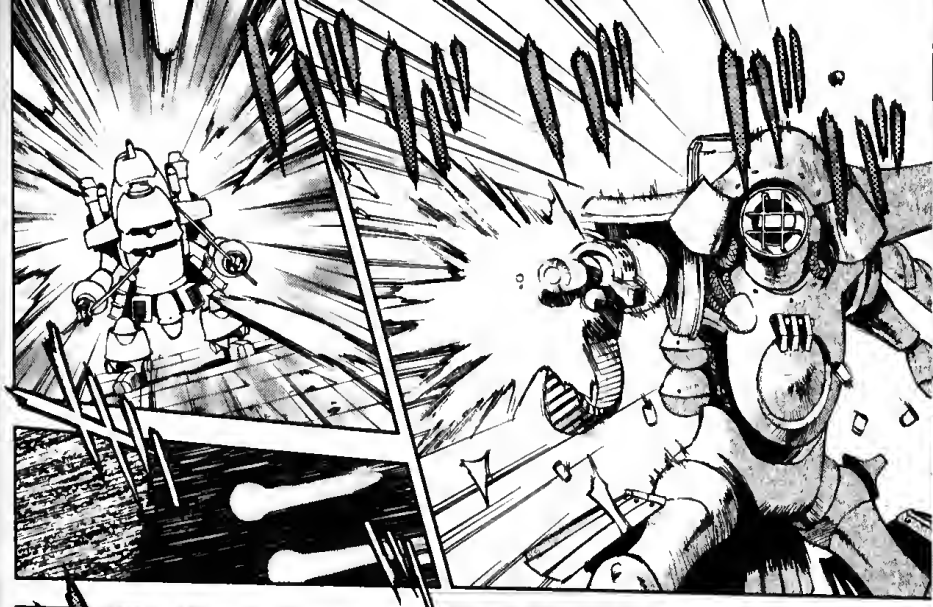
LOOK CLOSELY SUMIRE-KUN...
NO...

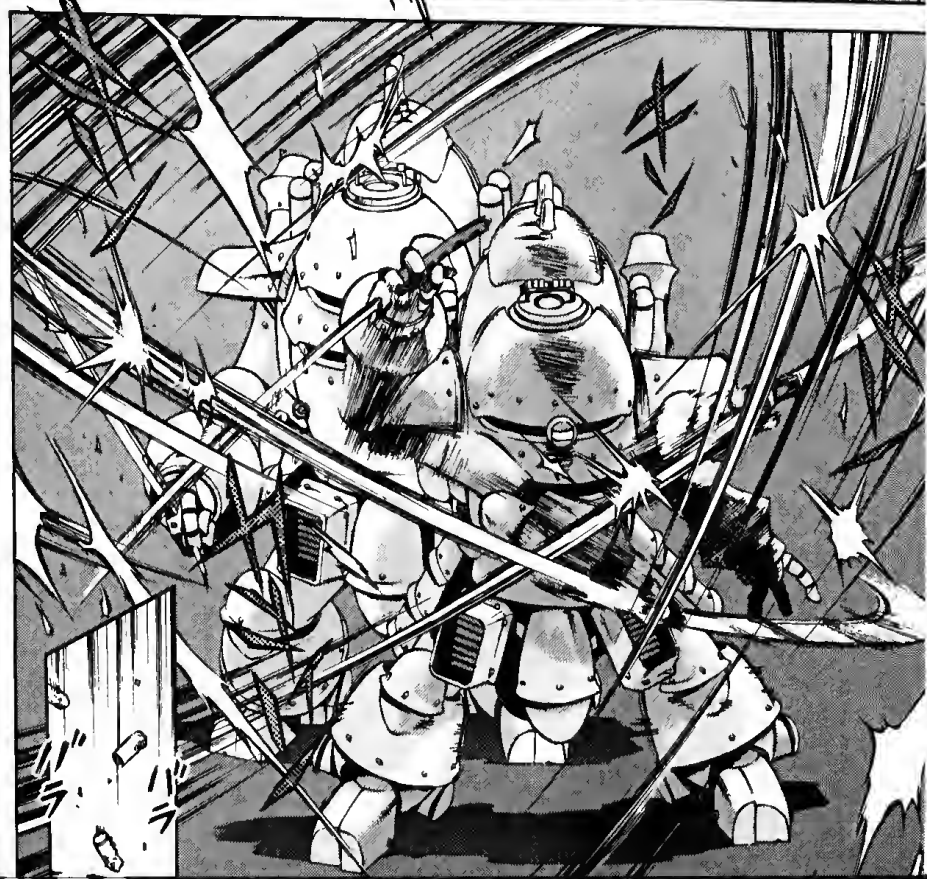
IF THE TOWER IS DESTROYED, EVERYTHING FROM CODE TRANSMISSION OF THE MILITARY TO RADIO TRANS-MISSION IN PEOPLE'S LIVING ROOMS WILL BE CUT OFF!
THAT'S BAD NEWS, OGAMI-HAN.


HE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT US. HE ONLY WANTS TO DESTROY THE TOWER.
HE'S GOING STRAIGHT FOR THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL TOWER.
チョーン
チョーン


O-GAMI-SAN...
LEAVE THIS TO ME!
B-BUT...!
SA-KURA-KUN!


A KLUTZ LIKE HER CAN'T HANDLE THEM BY HERSELF!
SURELY YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS!
I CAN HANDLE THIS KIND OF WAKIJI...
...ALL ON MY OWN!
DON'T WORRY.

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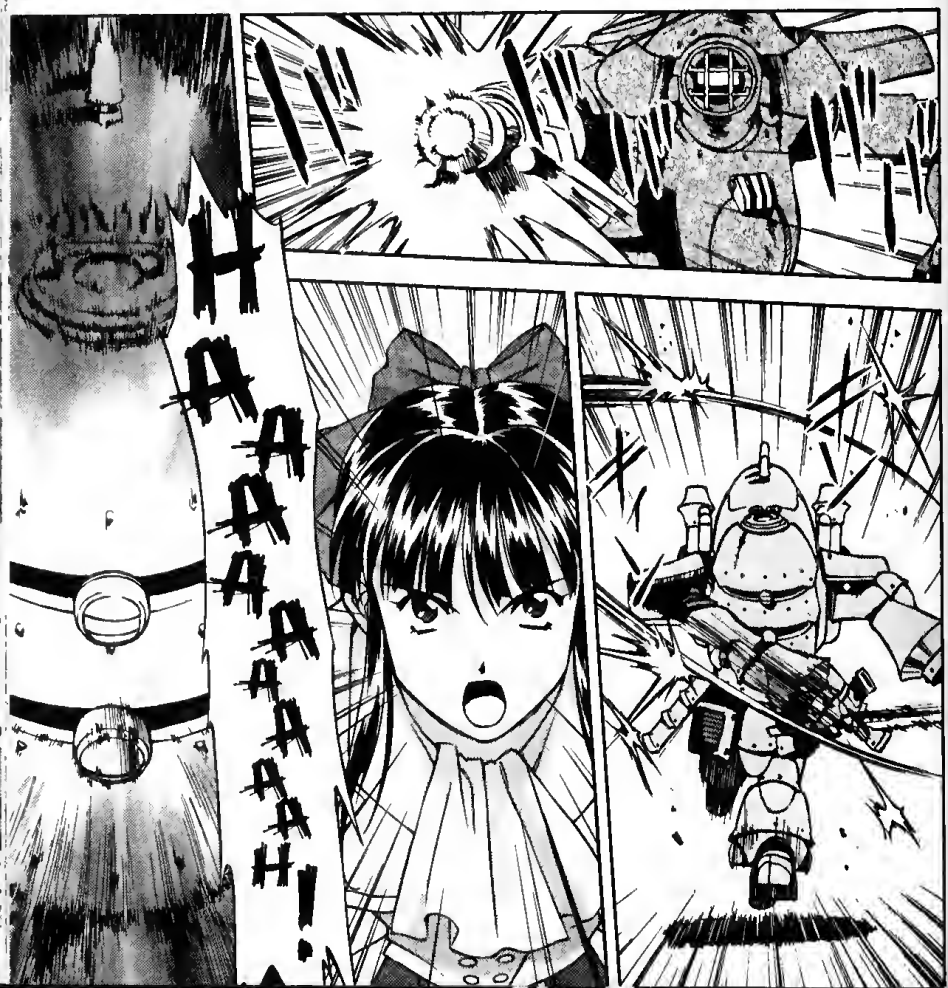
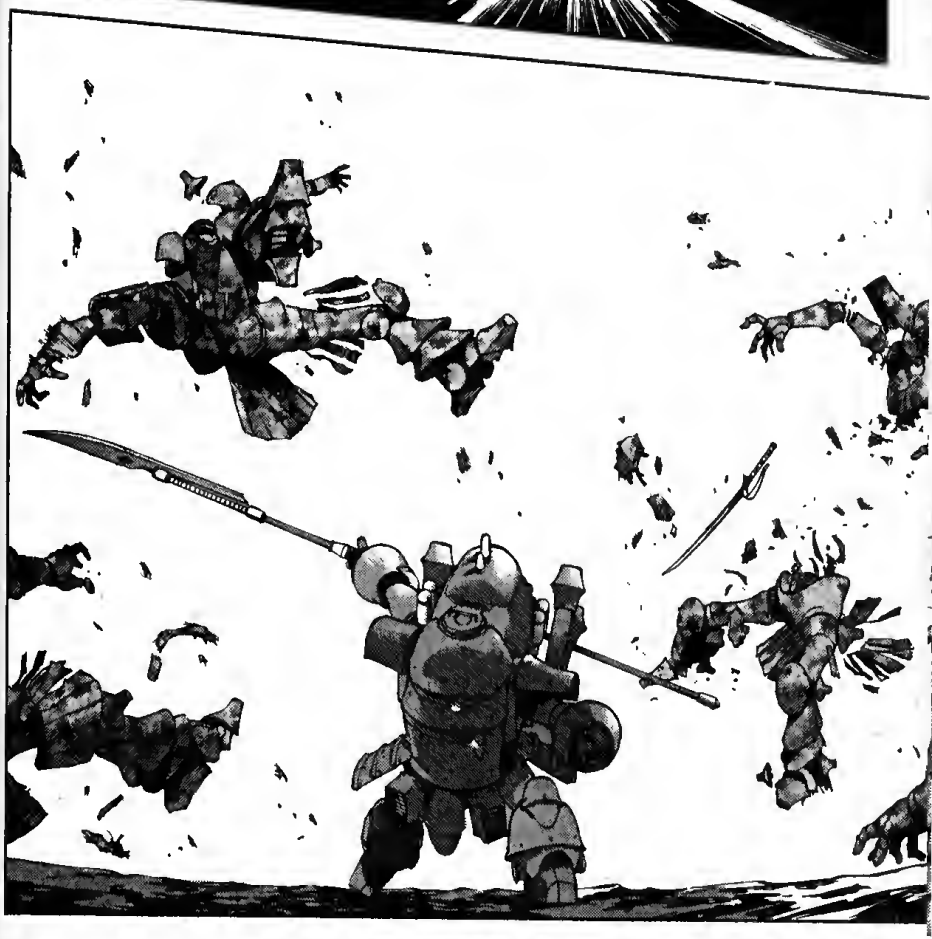
I SHALL STAY HERE, TOO!
THE REST OF YOU GO AND GET THAT BLACK WAKIJI!
LET'S DIVIDE UP INTO TWO GROUPS AS SUMIRE SAYS!
ENSIGN, WE SHOULD CONCERN OURSELVES WITH THE CAPITAL TOWER.
SU-MIRE-KUN...

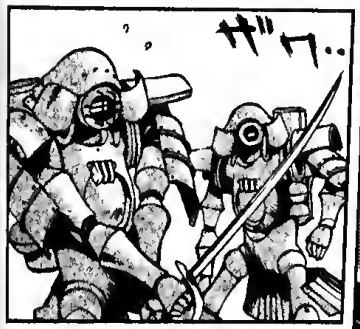
ALL RIGHT.
THE THREE OF US, OGAMI, MARIA AND KOHRAN, WILL PURSUE AND DESTROY THE BLACK WAKIJI.
SAKURA-KUN, SUMIRE-KUN...
...I'M ENTRUST-ING THE SITUATION HERE TO YOU!
YES, SIR!!
THANK YOU, SUMIRE-SAN!
DON'T MIS-UNDER-STAND ME.
I HAVEN'T FORGIVEN YOU FOR YOUR MISTAKES IN THE PERFOR-MANCE!
O-oh...

WE'RE ON, SAKURA-SAN!
RIGHT.
YES!
HUH ...

YOU DARE TO CHALLENGE ME, YOU PETTY UNDER-LINGS?!
NOW THEN!


HAAAAAAAAH!

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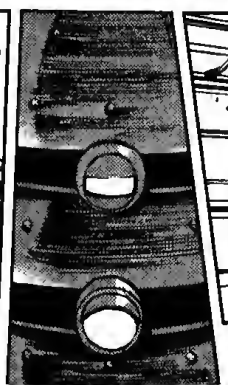

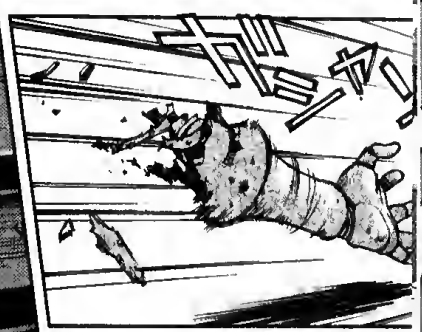
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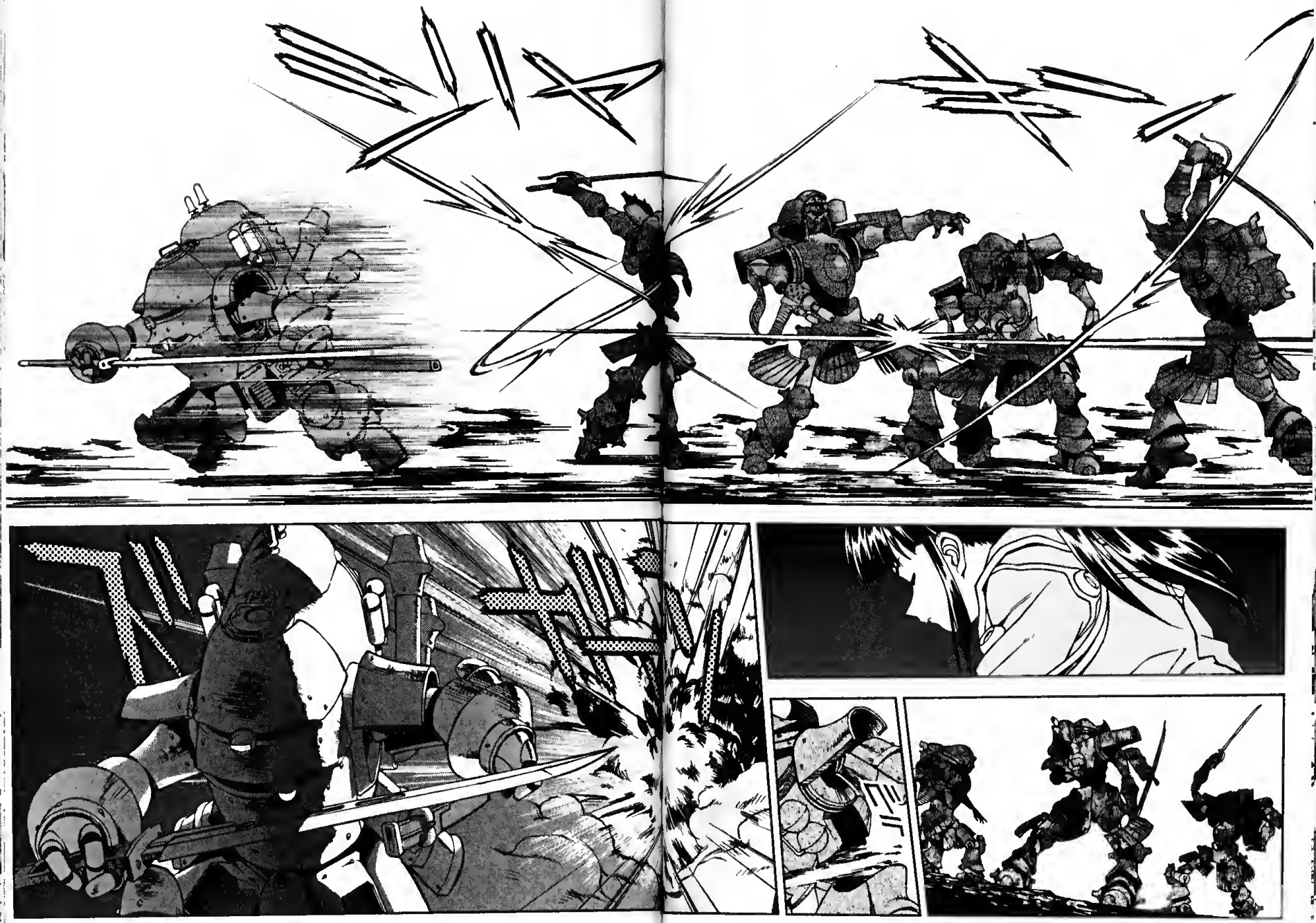
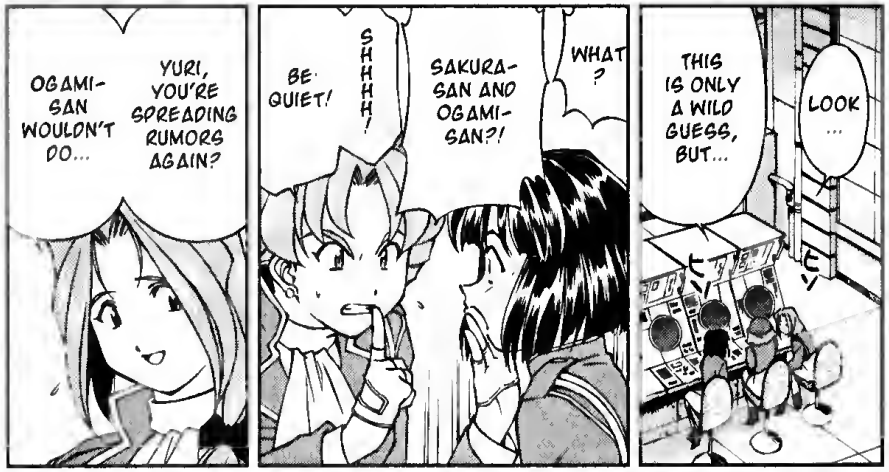
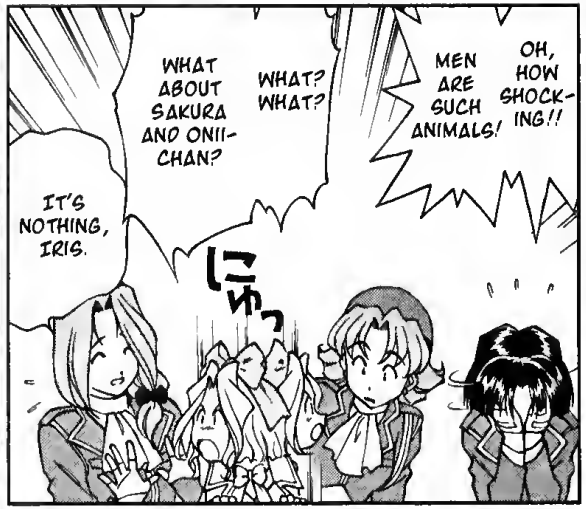
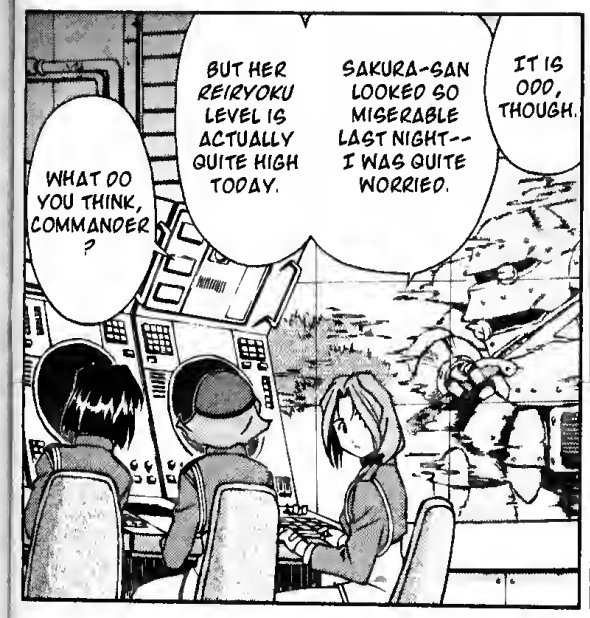



OGAMI-SAN WOULDN'T DO...
YURI, YOU'RE SPREADING RUMORS AGAIN?
SHHHH!
BE QUIET!
SAKURA-SAN AND OGAMI-SAN?!
WHAT?
THIS IS ONLY A WILD GUESS, BUT...
LOOK...

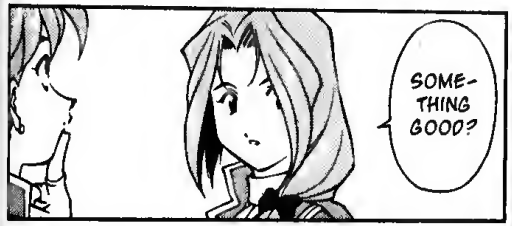
WE MUSTN'T LET OUR GUARD DOWN!
REALLY?
IT'S ALWAYS THE SERIOUS-LOOKING ONES WHO TURN UP SPYING IN THE BATH, YOU KNOW!
KASUMI-SAN, YOU'RE FAR TOO NAIVE!

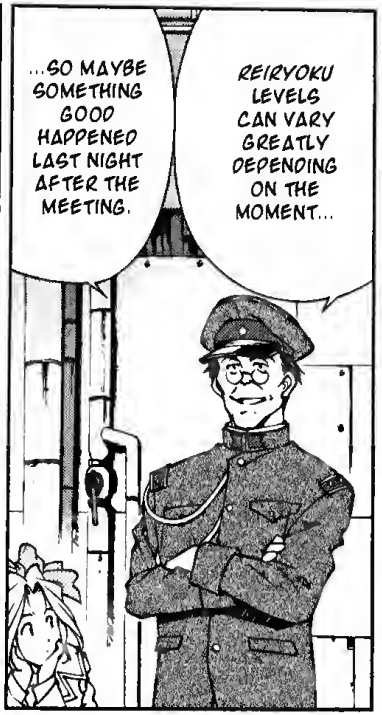
WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A BATTLE, YOU KNOW?
UH... LADIES...


WHAT ABOUT SAKURA AND ONII-CHAN?
WHAT? WHAT?
MEN ARE SUCH ANIMALS!
OH, HOW SHOCKING!!
IT'S NOTHING, IRIS.
にゅっ


WHAT DO YOU THINK, COMMANDER?
BUT HER REIRYOKU LEVEL IS ACTUALLY QUITE HIGH TODAY.
SAKURA-SAN LOOKED SO MISERABLE LAST NIGHT--I WAS QUITE WORRIED.
IT IS ODD, THOUGH.

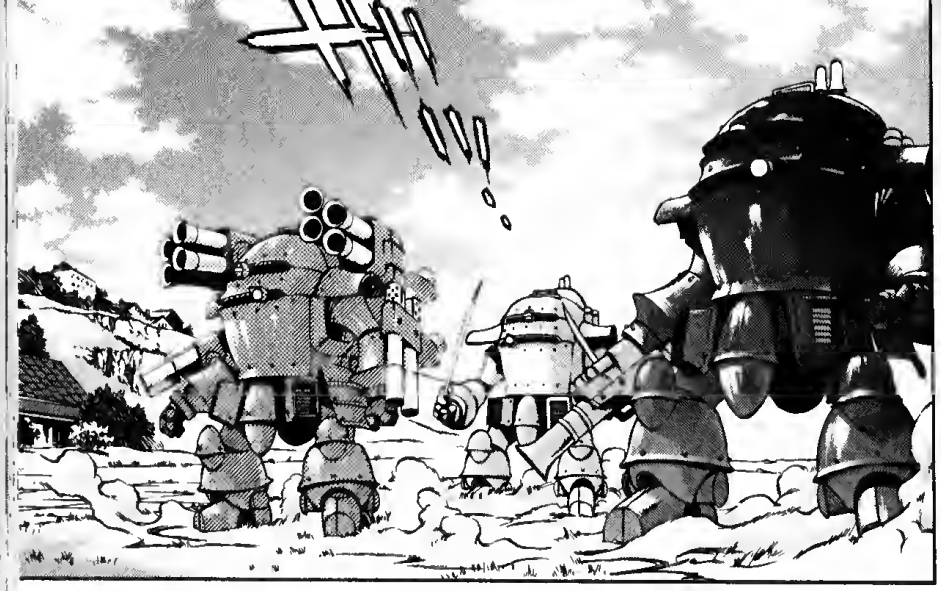
WOW, WOW! AMAZING!
SAKURA-SAN'S FANTASTIC.
SHE'S LIKE THAT FAMOUS KABUKI ACTOR, MATSUNOSUKE ONOE!


SOMETHING GOOD?


...SO MAYBE SOMETHING GOOD HAPPENED LAST NIGHT AFTER THE MEETING.
REIRYOKU LEVELS CAN VARY GREATLY DEPENDING ON THE MOMENT...

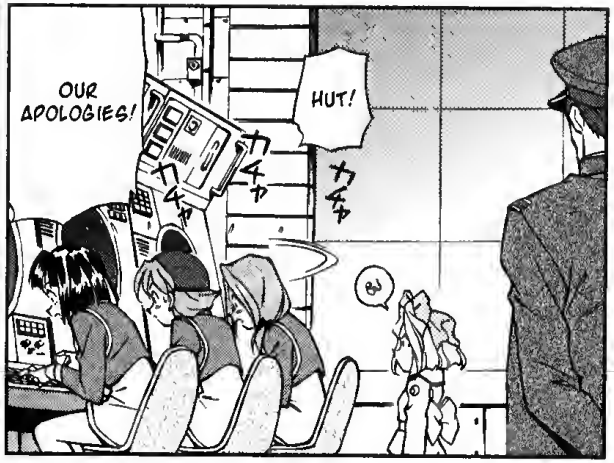
WHAT IS IT, YURI-SAN?

MAYBE ...!
WHOA!



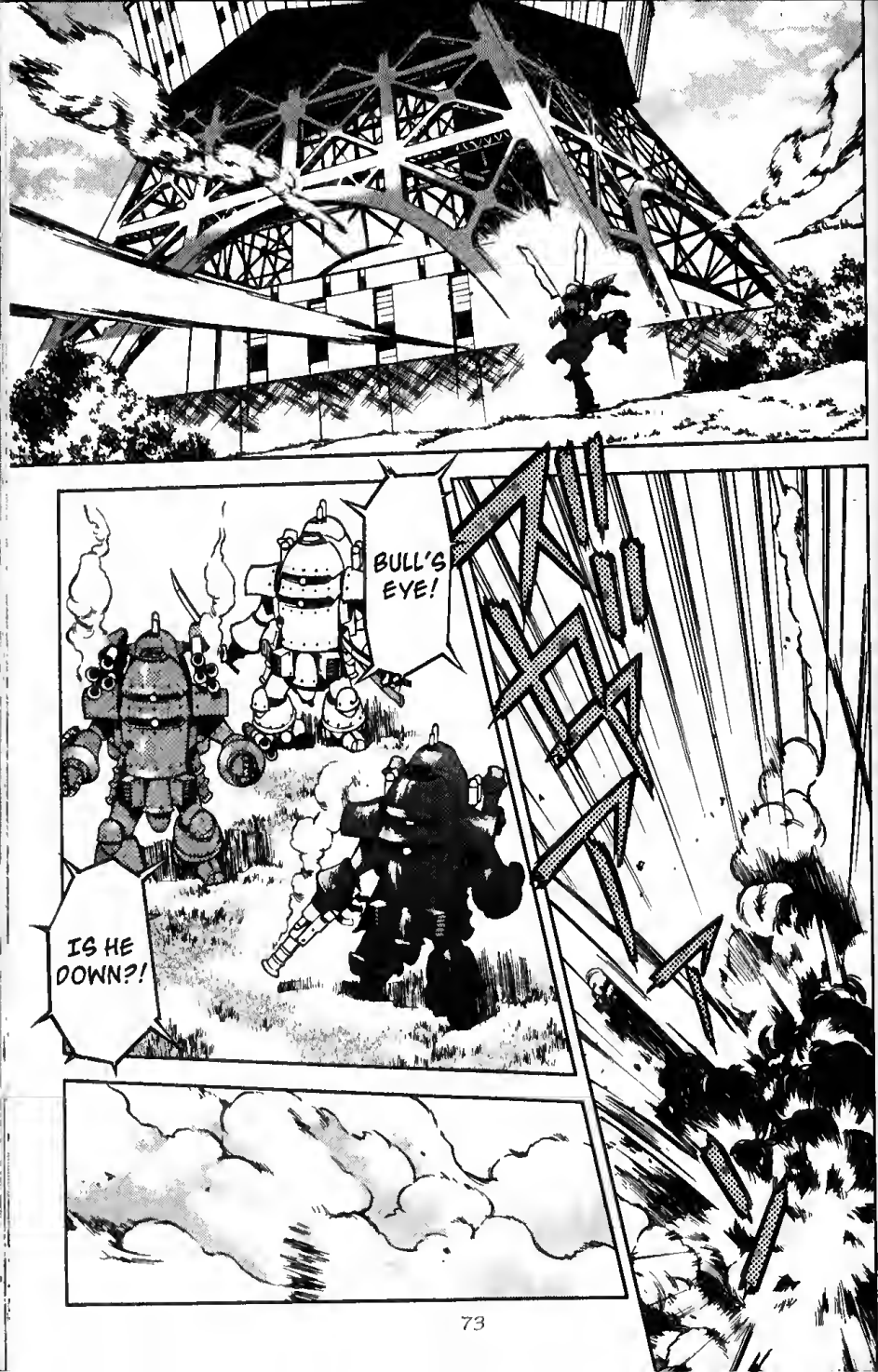
WE'LL TRY TO GET HIM WITH A SINGLE SHOT.
MARIA AND KOHRAN, YOU TWO FIRE AT HIM IN UNISON.
HE'S DOING THAT STRANGE WALK AGAIN.
WHATTA CLOWN!
AYE, SIR!!

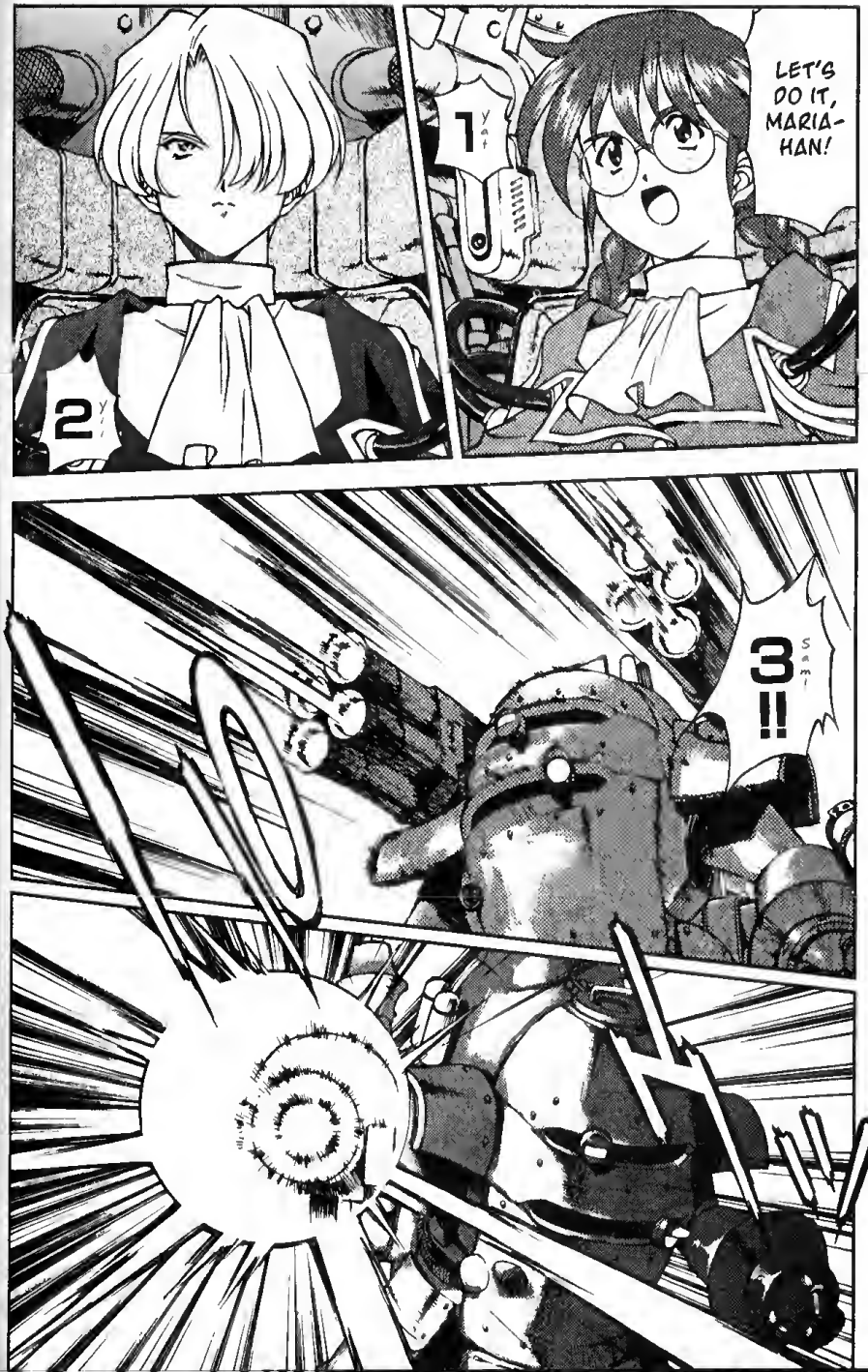
Yuri, you started it!
But, Kasumi-san...


OUR APOLOGIES!
HUT!

IT SEEMS TO BE...
...TEN-KAI...
...AFTER ALL.

.....


BULL'S EYE!
IS HE DOWN?!


1
LET'S DO IT, MARIA-HAN!
2
3!!

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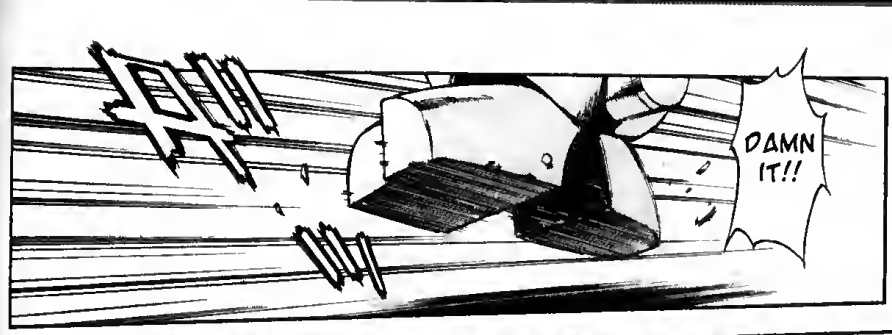
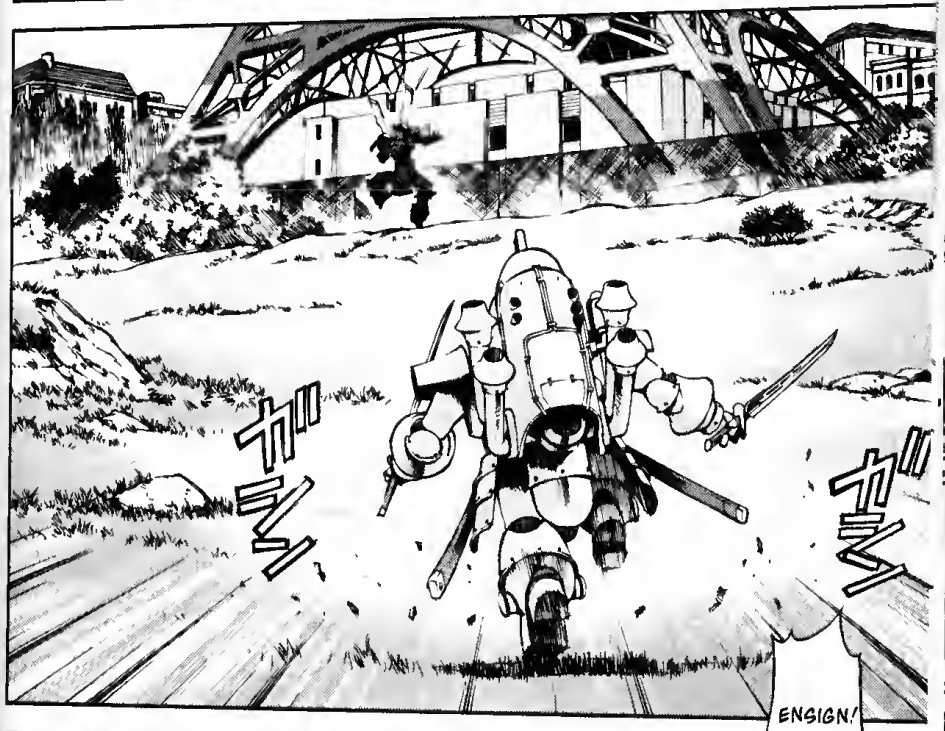
THAT WAS A DIRECT HIT!
HOW ... HOW COULD IT BE?
!!

URRAAAH!


DAMN IT!!

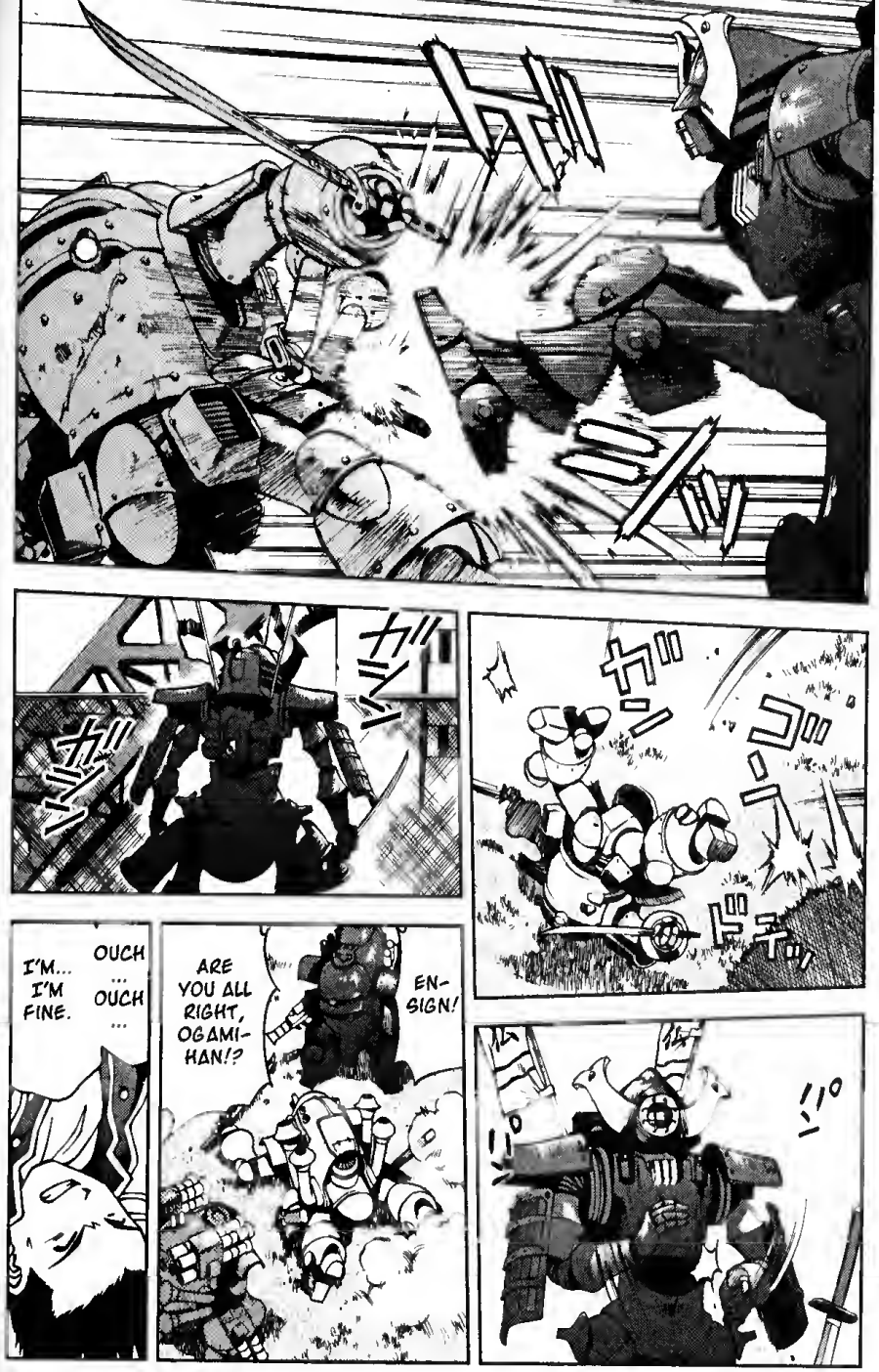

ガシン
ガシン

ENSIGN!
IN THAT CASE ...
...HOW ABOUT MY SWORD ?!

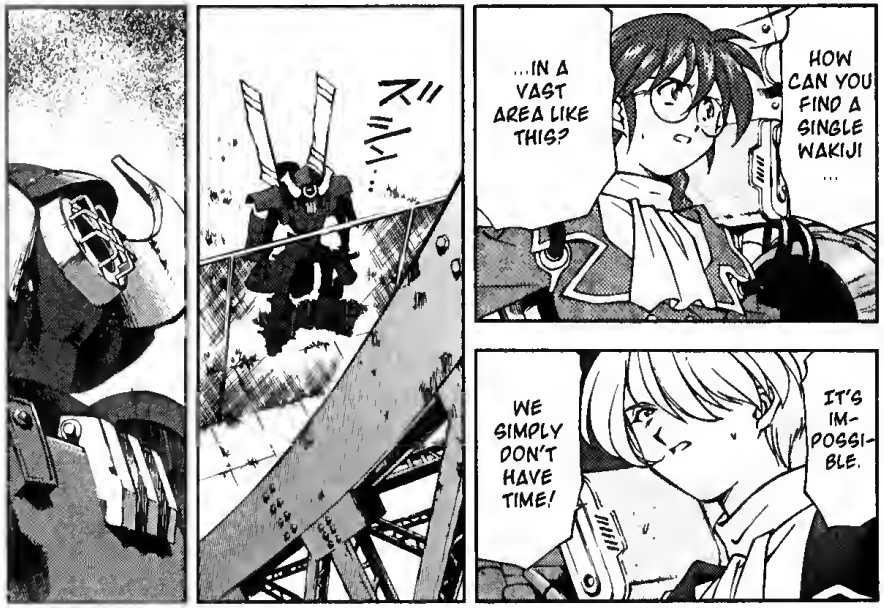
抹
殺
ANNIHILATE!
GUWAAAH!

THIS IS NOTHING TO HIM!
DAMN...
WHOA!

WHAT CAN WE DO?!
THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL TOWER IS IN DANGER ...
WHAT KIND OF A MONSTER IS HE?!
HOW COULD THERE BE NO DAMAGE AFTER AN ATTACK OF SUCH FORCE?!
YES, TSUBAKI-CHAN.
OGAMI-SAN, COME IN PLEASE!
OGAMI-SAN...
WHAT THE HELL?!
NO STEAM FEEDBACK?
I GET NO STEAM FEEDBACK!
I JUST RAN AN ANALYSIS USING THE STEAM VALUE CALCULATOR, BUT...
...THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT THAT WAKIJI!
IT MEANS ...
THAT WAKIJI DOES NOT EXIST!


I'M... I'M FINE.
OUCH ... OUCH ...
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, OGAMI-HAN!?
EN-SIGN!

URGH
...

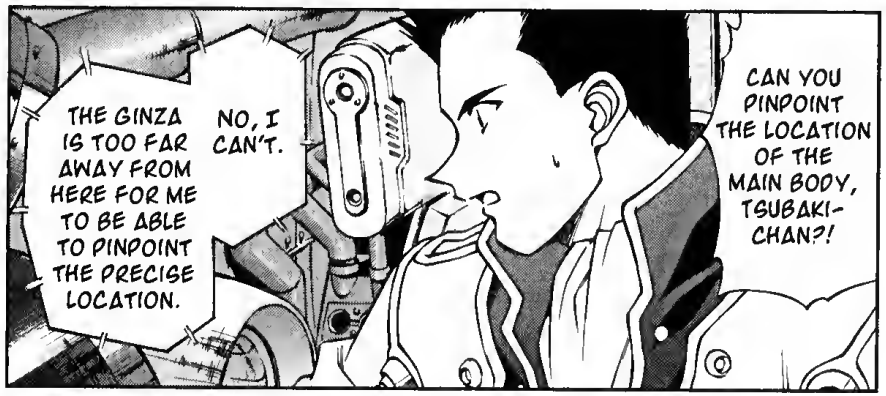

ZZZ!!
...IN A VAST AREA LIKE THIS?
HOW CAN YOU FIND A SINGLE WAKIJI ...
WE SIMPLY DON'T HAVE TIME!
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

WHAT CAN WE DO...?!
DAMN!

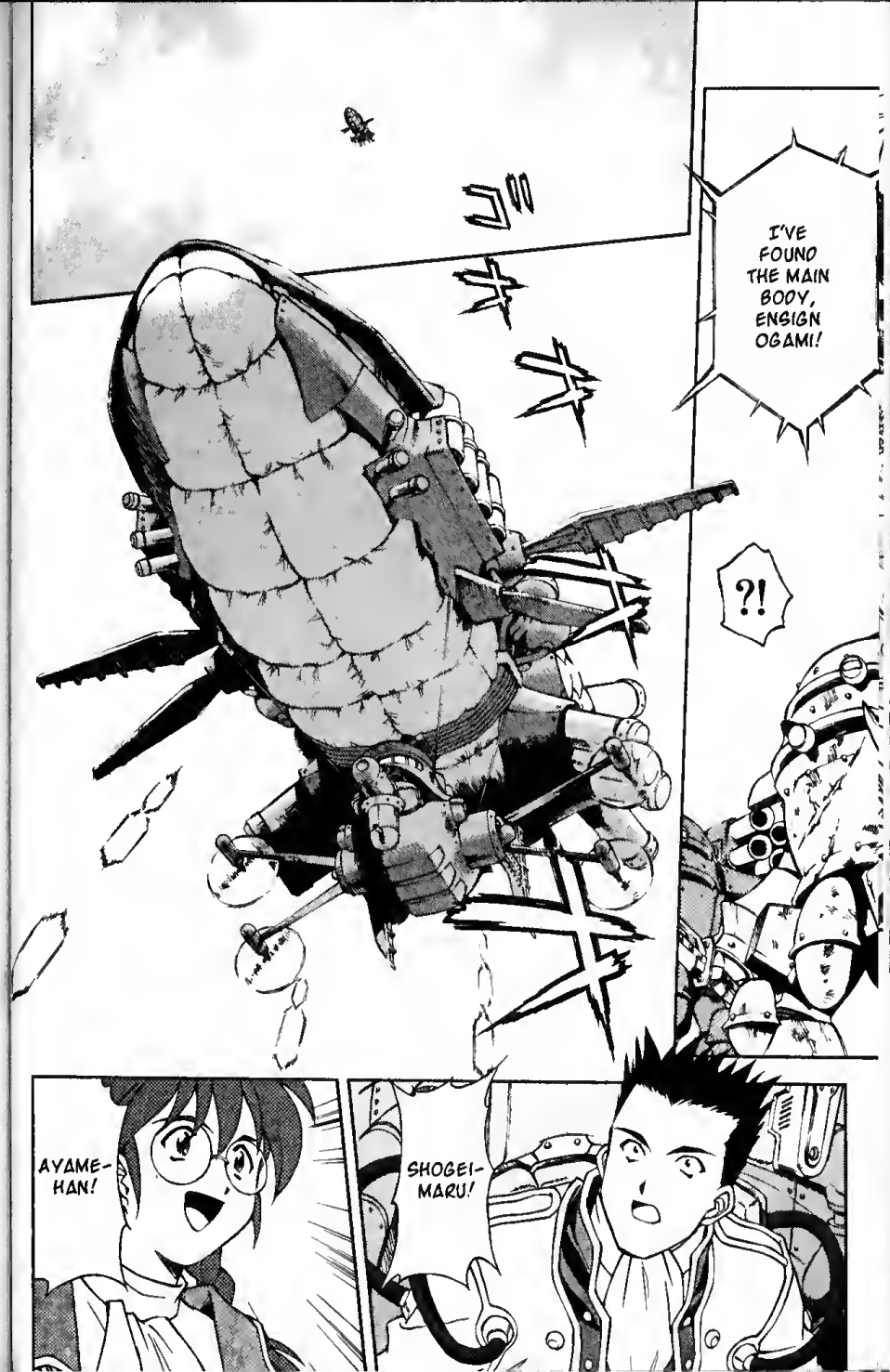
HOW DO WE GET RID OF IT?
SO TSUBAKI...

WHAT ?!
SO THAT THING IS A PHANTOM OR SOMETHING?

IF YOU CAN DESTROY IT, PERHAPS ...
THE MAIN BODY MUST BE HIDING AROUND THERE SOMEWHERE.


THE GINZA IS TOO FAR AWAY FROM HERE FOR ME TO BE ABLE TO PINPOINT THE PRECISE LOCATION.
NO, I CAN'T.
CAN YOU PINPOINT THE LOCATION OF THE MAIN BODY, TSUBAKI-CHAN?!

I'M GOING TO MAKE AN AERIAL ASSAULT!
THOSE OF YOU NEAR THE TARGET, TAKE COVER!
ゴーー
IT'S WHERE SAKURA-KUN AND SUMIRE-KUN ARE!
!


I'VE FOUND THE MAIN BODY, ENSIGN OGAMI!
?!
AYAME-HAN!
SHOGEI-MARU!

LOOK, SUMIRE-SAN!
!
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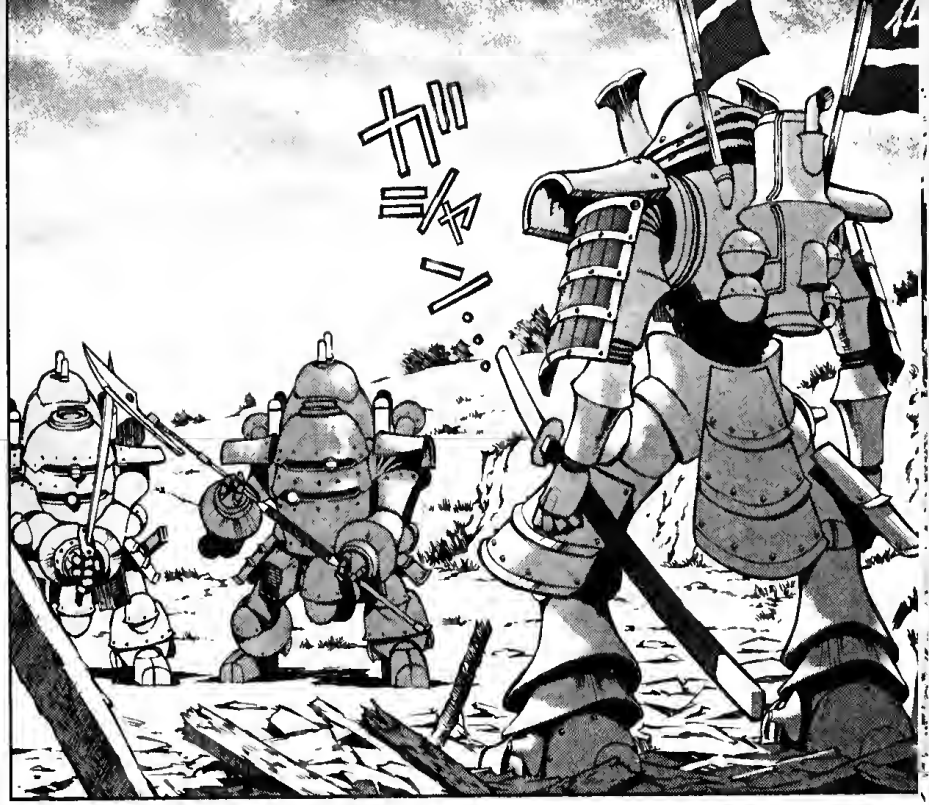
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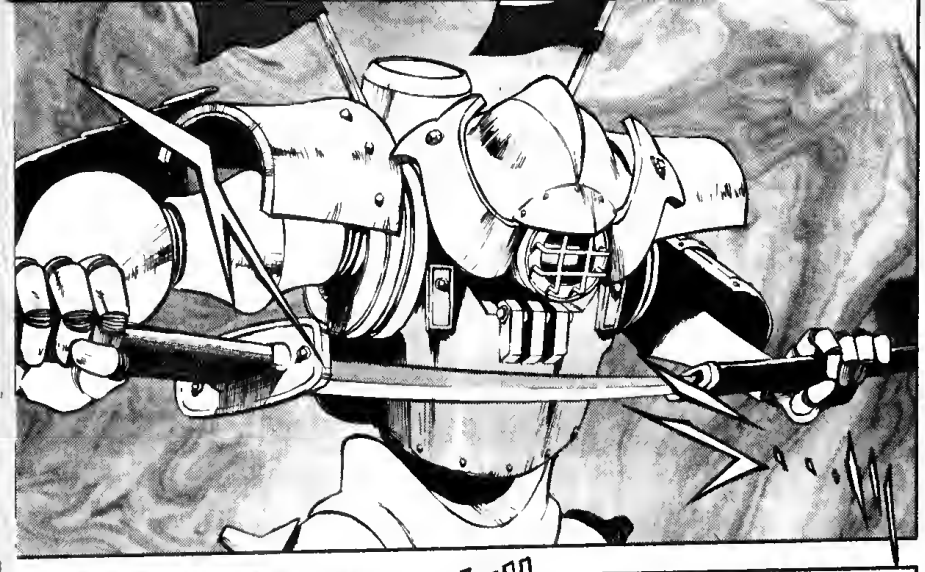
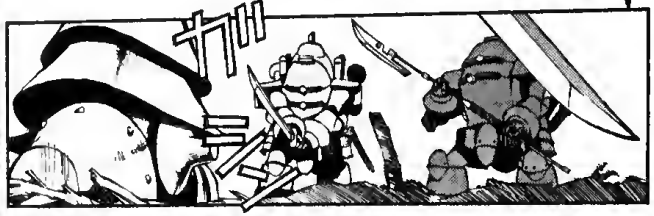
THIS IS...
...THE ENEMY'S MAIN BODY...!

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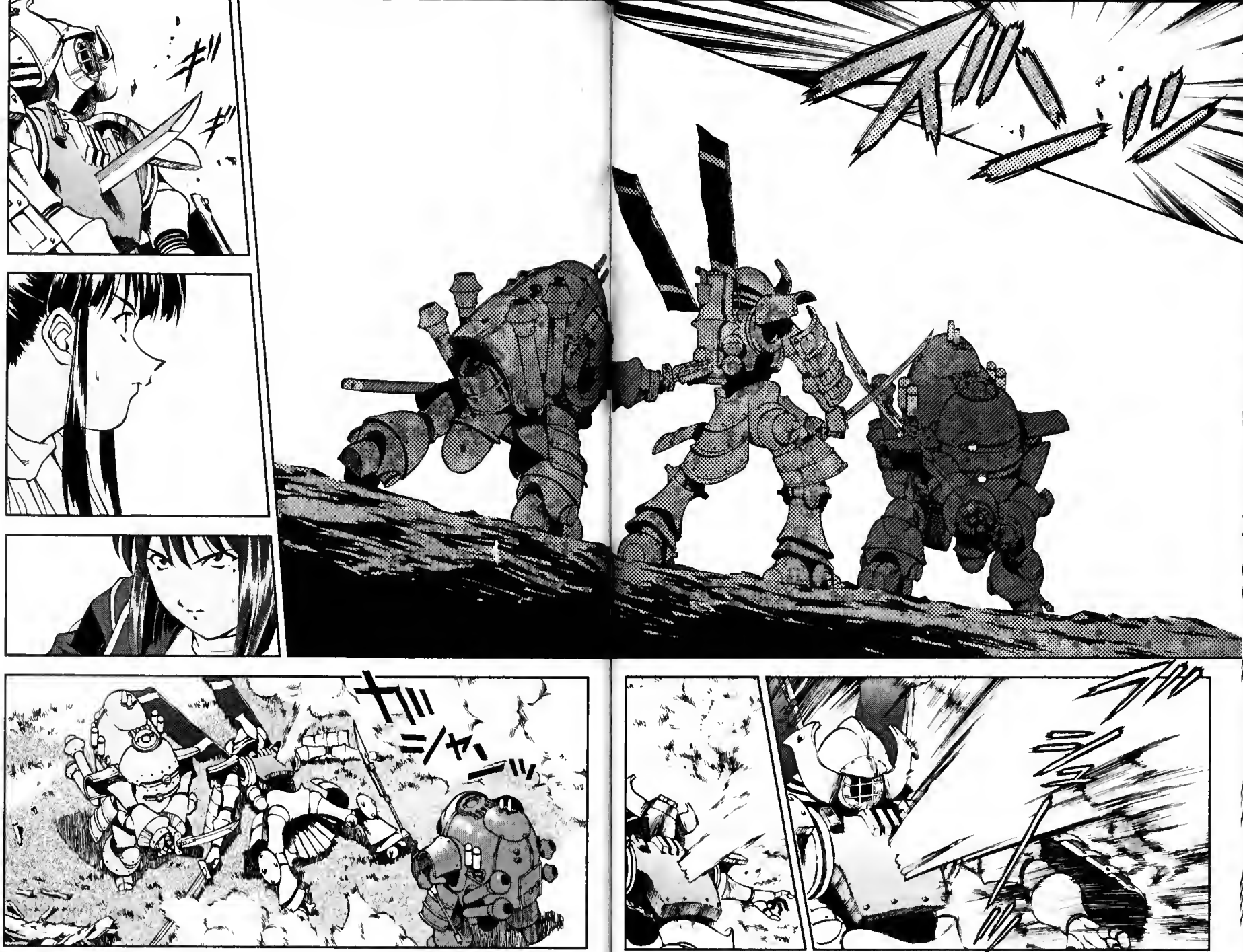
YES!

SA-KURA-SAN...
I'LL DISTRACT THE ENEMY!
WHILE HIS ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON ME, YOU STRIKE!
UNDER-STOOD?

TWO...

HERE WE GO.
ONE...

SAKURA-SAN, NOW!!
RIGHT !!
HAAAAAAA!!
THREE !!
EEEEEEEYAH!



THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL TOWER...
...SHALL BE SAVED!!
ゴゴゴ
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OW.
UNTIL THE MAIN BODY IS DESTROYED ...
I WON'T LET GO, EVEN IF I DIE!
ゴゴゴ
THE PHANTOM IS GONE ...
WHAT IS IT?
.....
THAT MEANS...!
WELL, OF COURSE ... ♪
...SAKURA-SAN AND I DESTROYED THE ENEMY ALL ON OUR OWN, WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT!
I'M SORRY YOU TWO HAD TO COME ALL THIS WAY FOR NOTHING.
YOU LIVE UP TO YOUR REP, SUMIRE-HAN.
STILL, YOU TWO MUST'VE HAD A TOUGH TIME!
NOT AT ALL!
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エリス！
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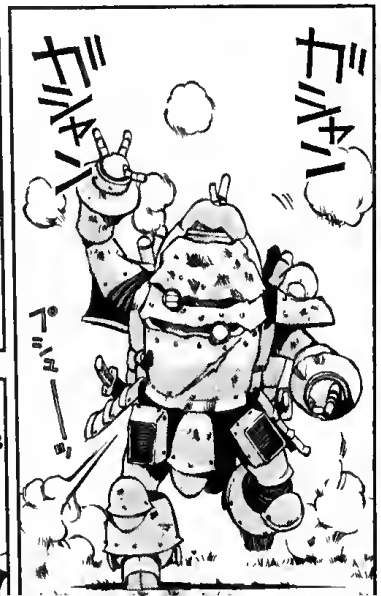
AH! OGAMI-SAN!
ENSIGN!

IT'S GOING TO TAKE ME ALL NIGHT TO FIX THAT!
WHOA, YOU'RE ALL BEAT UP!

WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU, KOHRAN.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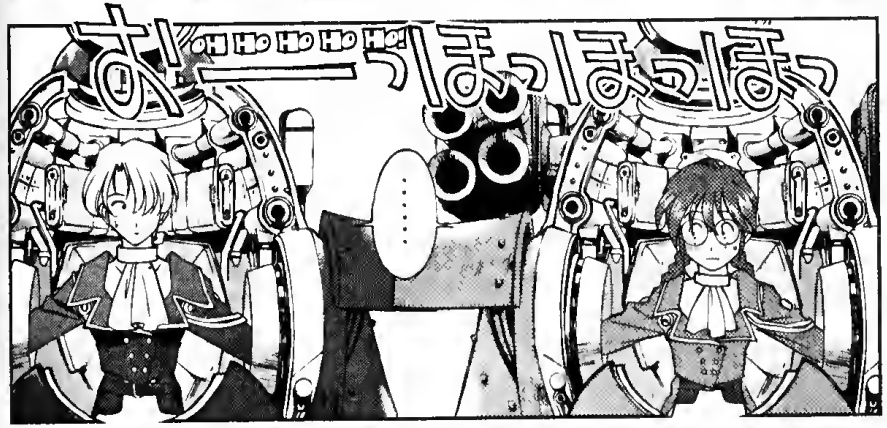
……

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
IT WAS THANKS TO YOUR EXPERT LEAD, SUMIRE-SAN.

YES!
RIGHT, SAKURA-SAN?
WHEN SAKURA-SAN AND I JOIN FORCES, AN ENEMY LIKE THAT IS SIMPLY NO MATCH FOR US!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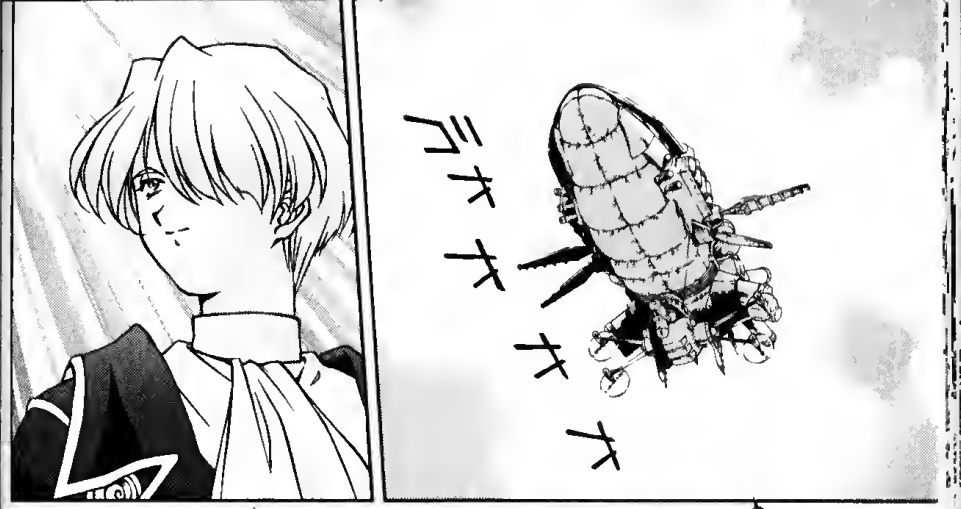
OH HO HO HO HO!
……

SINCE THE PHANTOM MUST HAVE DISAPPEARED WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MAIN BODY, HE SHOULD BE ALONG SOON.
ENSIGN STAYED BEHIND TO STOP THE PHANTOM BY HIMSELF.

WHERE IS OGAMI-SAN?
OH, BY THE WAY, MARIA-SAN...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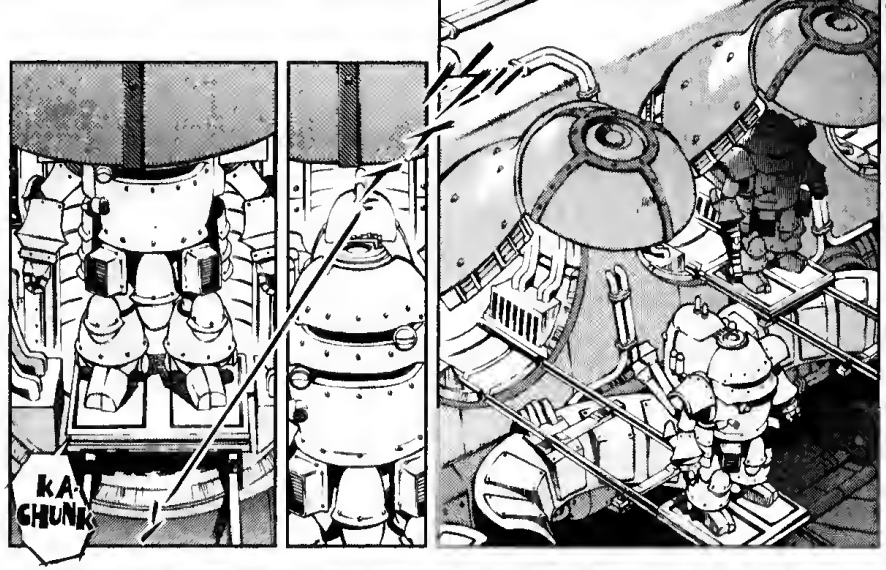
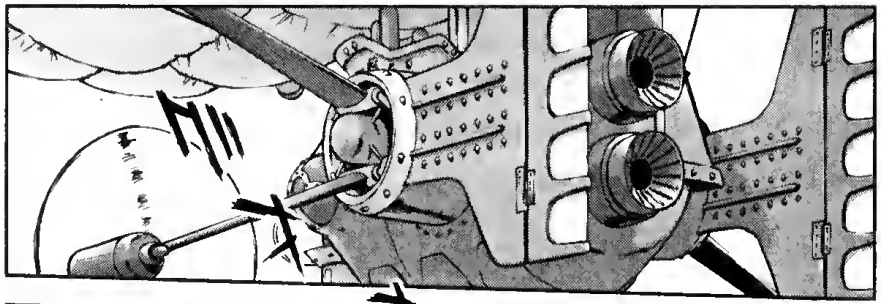
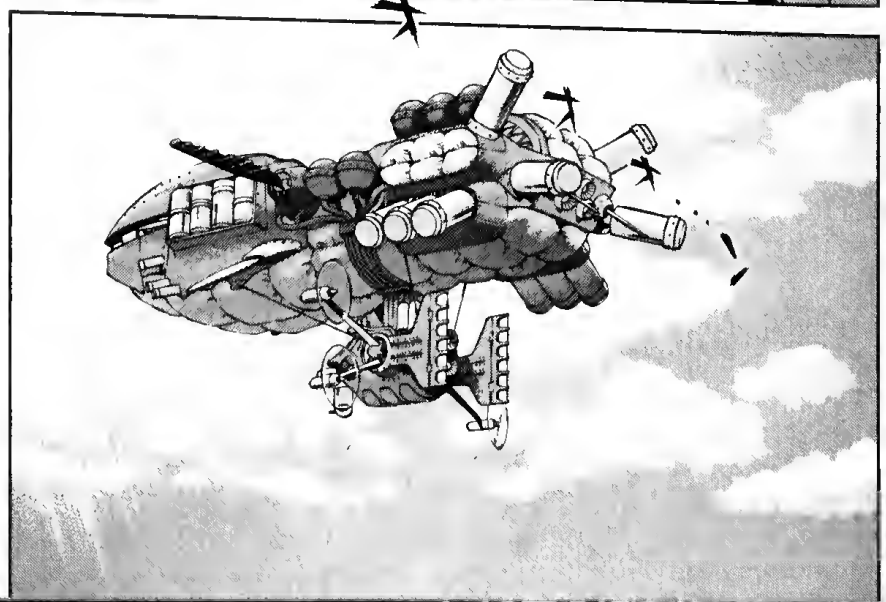
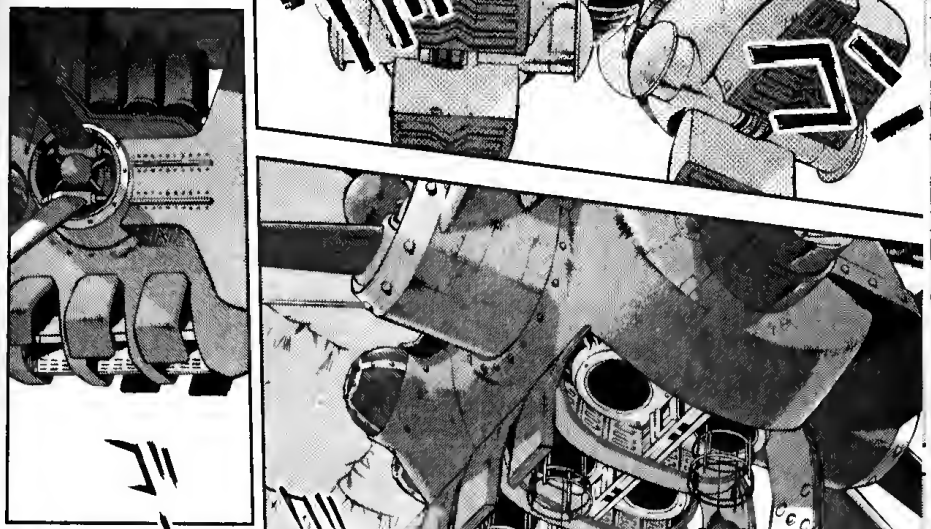
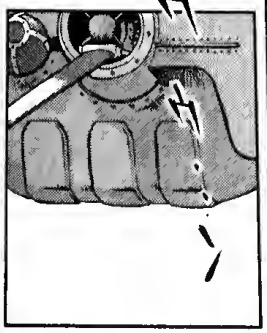


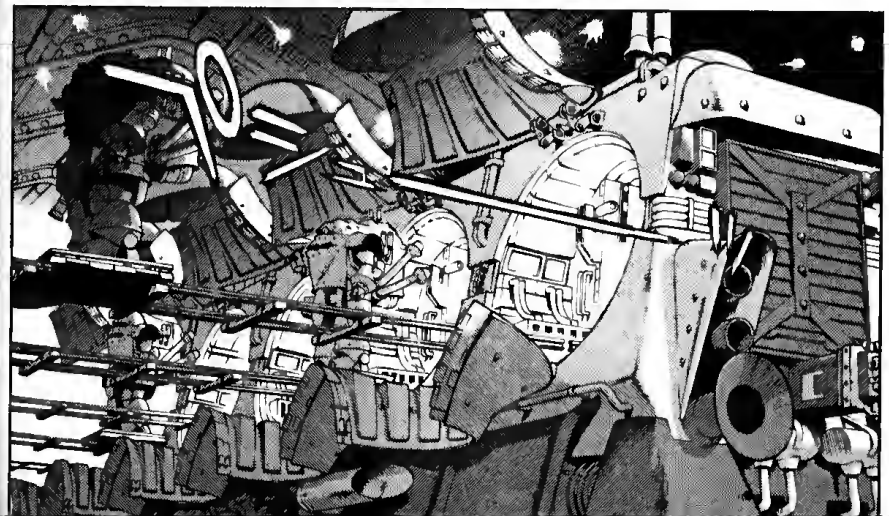


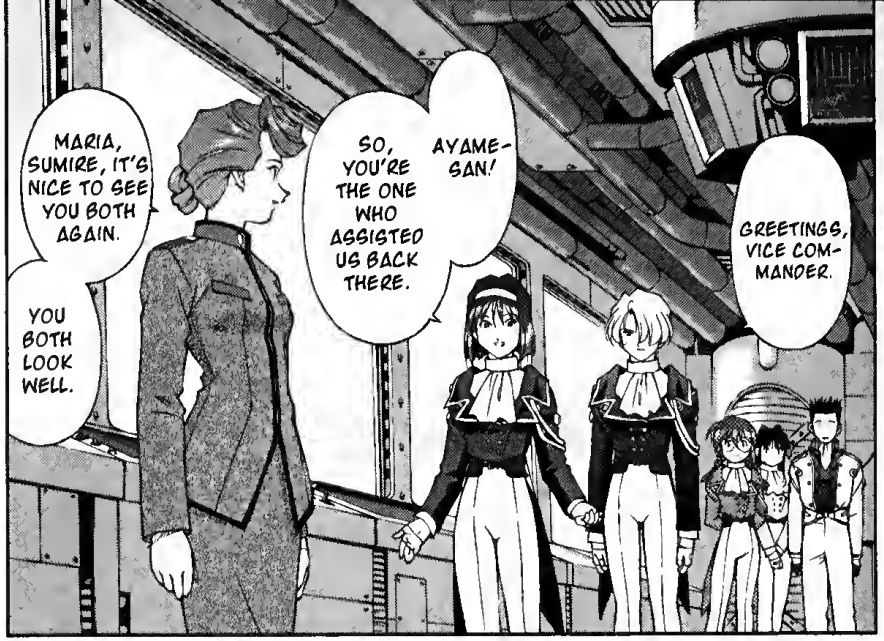




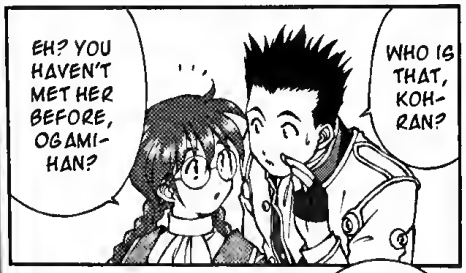


Chapter Twelve–Kanna's Return



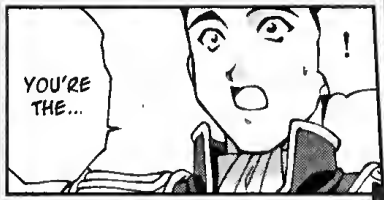

MARIA, SUMIRE, IT'S NICE TO SEE YOU BOTH AGAIN.
YOU BOTH LOOK WELL.
SO, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO ASSISTED US BACK THERE.
AYAME-SAN!
GREETINGS, VICE COMMANDER.

FORGIVE ME IF I GAVE YOU A HARD TIME THE OTHER DAY, ENSIGN OGAMI.
I'M FUJIEDA.


EH? YOU HAVEN'T MET HER BEFORE, OGAMI-HAN?
WHO IS THAT, KOH-RAN?

WHAT?
VICE COMMANDER OF HEADQUARTERS !?
FIRST LIEUTENANT AYAME FUJIEDA-HAN!
SHE'S THE TEIGEKI FLOWER MANSION DIVISION CHIEF AND VICE COMMANDER OF HEADQUARTERS ...

GOOD WORK, ENSIGN OGAMI.

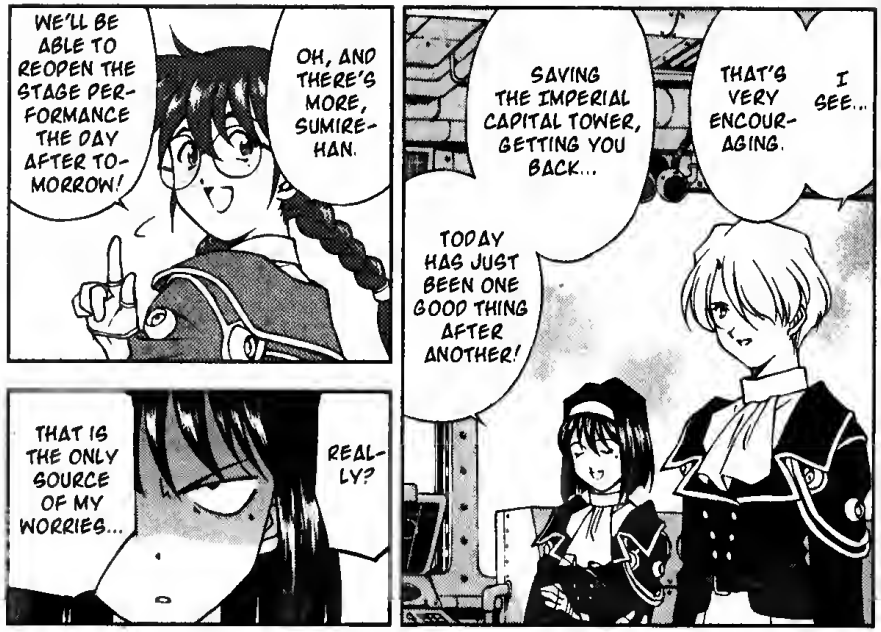

YOU'RE THE...
!

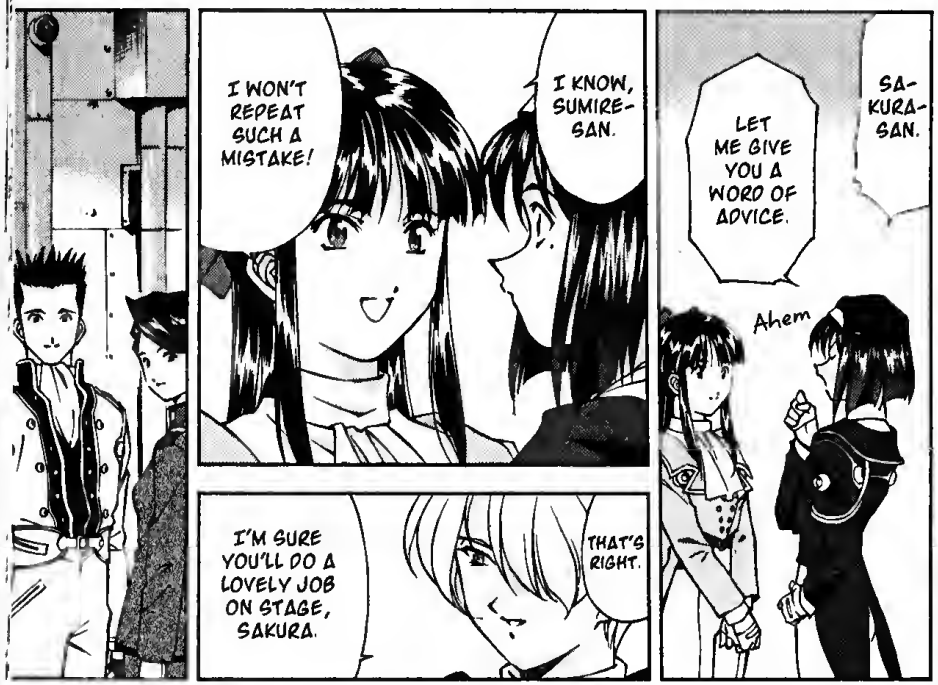
WELL, UH...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "THE MYSTERIOUS OLDER WOMAN"?

THE MYSTERIOUS OLDER WOMAN!!

AYAME-SAN...
IT'S A PLEA-SURE TO MEET YOU.
YOU MUST BE SAKURA SHINGUJI-SAN.
I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE GRATEFUL.
NOT AT ALL.
THANK YOU FOR ALWAYS HELPING MY FATHER.
MY FA-THER ...
HUT!
YES, SIR.
OGAMI-KUN.
....?

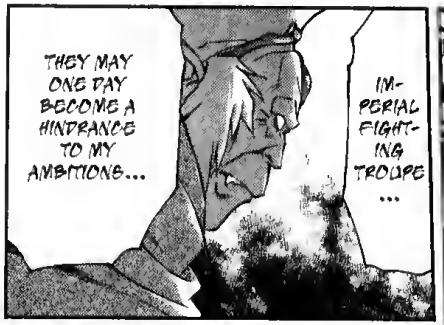
I APOLOGIZE FOR MY RUDENESS THE OTHER DAY, SIR!
WELL, N-NO, OF COURSE NOT, SIR!
IT'S NOTHING, REALLY.
Ha Ha Ha Ha...
WHAT HAP-PENED?
HOW COME YOU'RE TURNING RED, OGAMI-KUN?
AYAME FUJIEDA-SAN...
THIS IS...


WE'LL BE ABLE TO REOPEN THE STAGE PERFORMANCE THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW!
OH, AND THERE'S MORE, SUMIRE-HAN.
THAT IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF MY WORRIES...
REALLY?
SAVING THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL TOWER, GETTING YOU BACK...
TODAY HAS JUST BEEN ONE GOOD THING AFTER ANOTHER!
THAT'S VERY ENCOURAGING.
I SEE...


I WON'T REPEAT SUCH A MISTAKE!
I KNOW, SUMIRE-SAN.
I'M SURE YOU'LL DO A LOVELY JOB ON STAGE, SAKURA.
THAT'S RIGHT.
LET ME GIVE YOU A WORD OF ADVICE.
SA-KURA-SAN.
Ahem

AS THE CAPTAIN OF THE FLOWER DIVISION, I EXPECT THAT YOU'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF THESE LADIES.
I HAVE HIGH HOPES FOR YOU.

GOOD.
I, ICHIRO OGAMI, SHALL DO MY BEST, SIR!
HUT!
AS OF TODAY, I'M RETURNING TO THE IMPERIAL THEATER.
IN-DEED.
BY THE WAY, VICE COMMANDER ...
ARE YOU FINISHED WITH YOUR ASSIGNMENT AT FLOWER MANSION?
I'LL BE WORKING WITH ALL OF YOU.

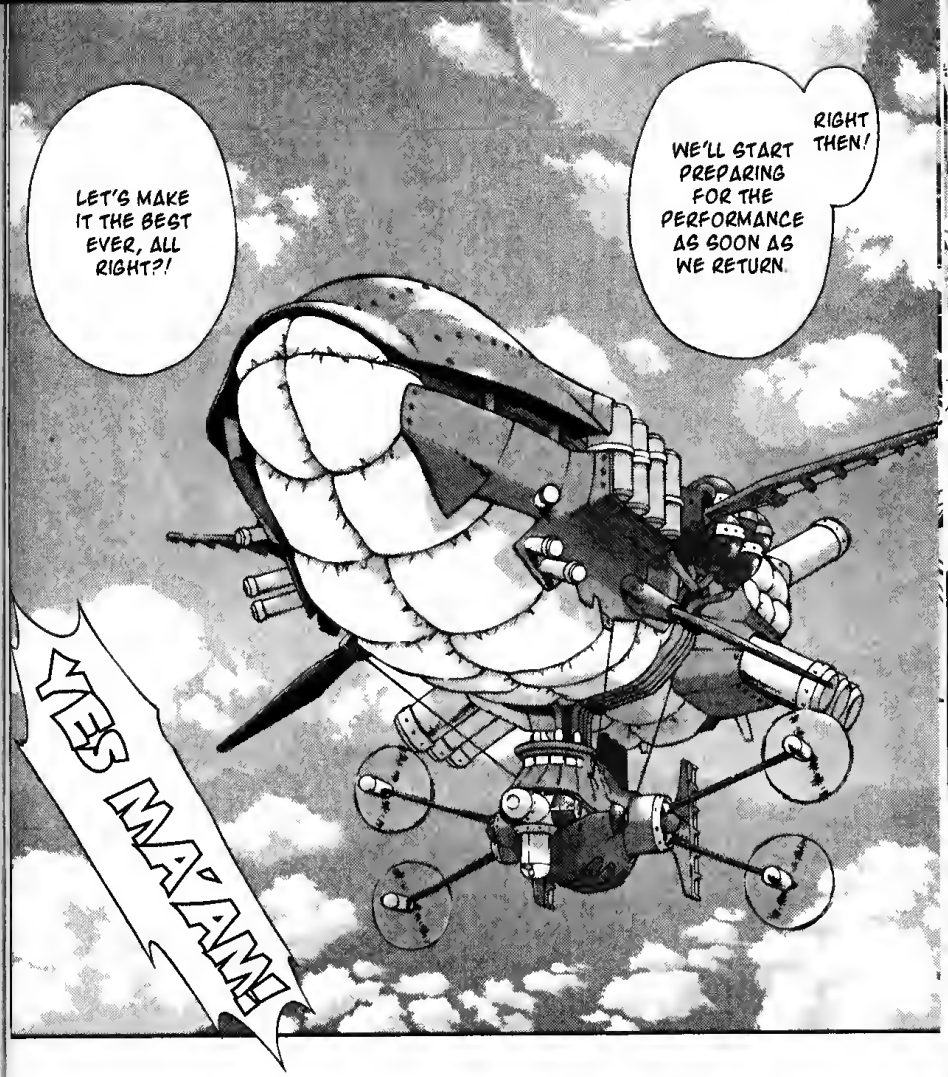

THEY MAY ONE DAY BECOME A HINDRANCE TO MY AMBITIONS...
IM-PERIAL FIGHT-ING TROUPE ...

URRR...
THEY SAW THROUGH THE PHANTOM MAGIC...

TENKAI-SAMA...
I SHALL HAMMER IN THE SECOND KUSABI.

KU KU KU KU!
AND AT THE SAME TIME, GET RID OF THAT THREAT.

LEAVE IT TO ME.
I SHALL NOT LET YOU DOWN ...
PALE SETSU-NA!
YES, YES.
I'M COUNTING ON YOU.


LET'S MAKE IT THE BEST EVER, ALL RIGHT?!
WE'LL START PREPARING FOR THE PERFORMANCE AS SOON AS WE RETURN.
RIGHT THEN!
YES MA'AM!

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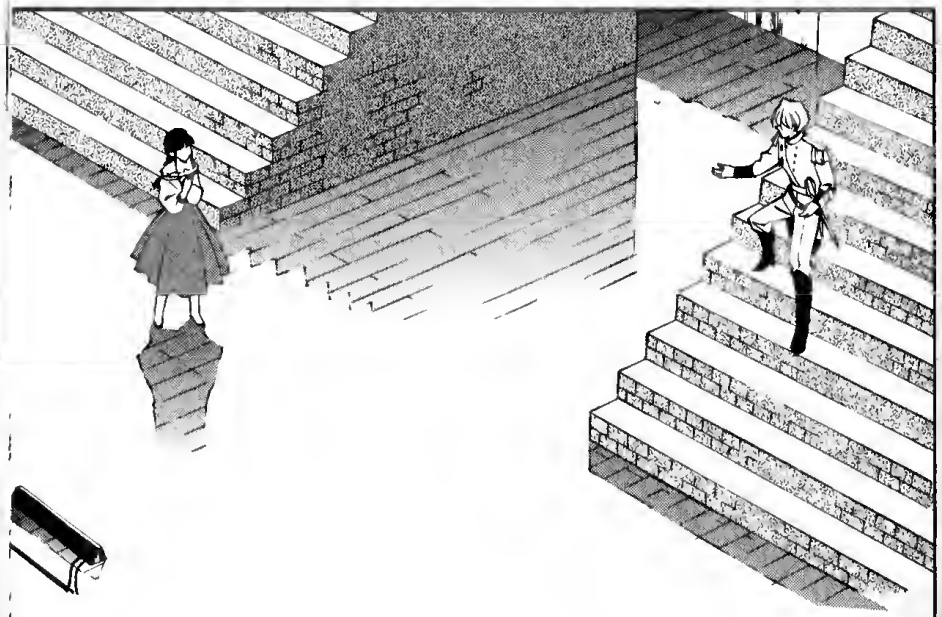
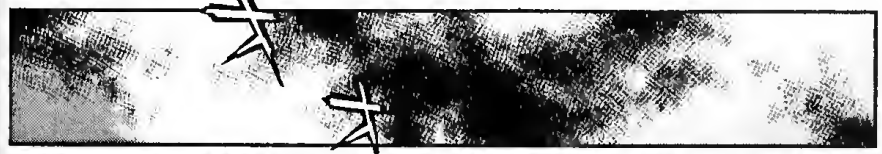
MON-SIEUR ANDRE!
THAT VOICE IS...
CLEMENTINE!
WHERE ARE YOU, CLEMEN-TINE?!
CLEMEN-TINE!!



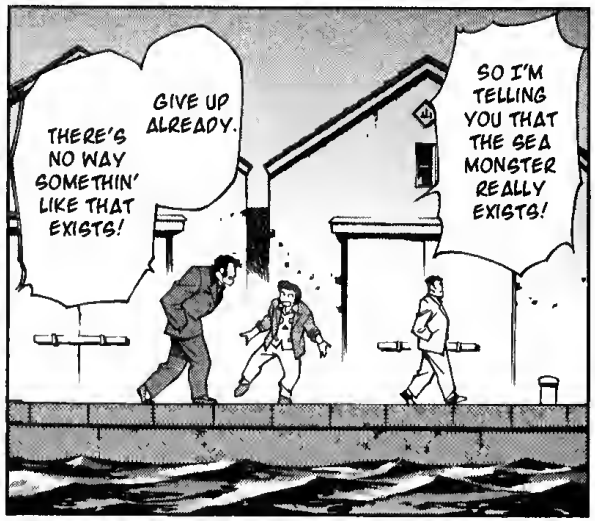
KU KU KU KU!
I SHALL MAKE A SACRIFICIAL SLAUGHTER OF THE IMPERIAL FIGHTING TROUPE!

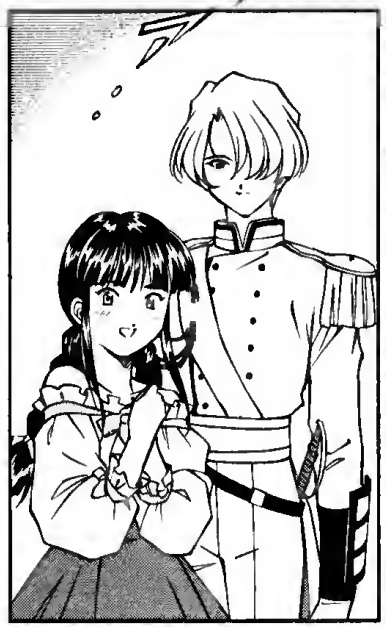


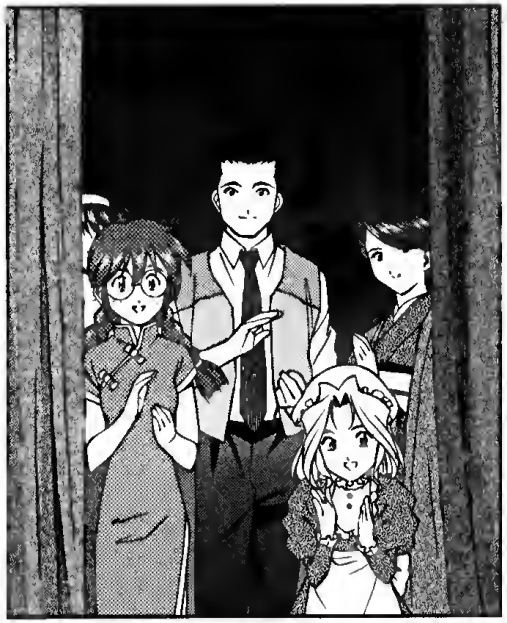
TO SHOW HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU...
TO PROTECT YOU...
YES...
I CAME JUST FOR YOU!
AND YOU CAME BACK FOR ME, MONSIEUR ANDRE!
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!

OH...
MONSIEUR ANDRE!
FROM NOW TO FOREVER, I SHALL LIVE FOR YOUR LOVE ONLY!!
EVEN IF THAT MEANS BECOMING AN ENEMY OF MY OWN COUNTRY...
AND NOW I WILL NEVER LET YOU GO!

A HUGE MONSTER CRAWLIN' OUTTA THE SEA LIKE...
BUT IT'S THERE, I TELL YOU!


THERE'S NO WAY SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT EXISTS!
GIVE UP ALREADY.
SO I'M TELLING YOU THAT THE SEA MONSTER REALLY EXISTS!

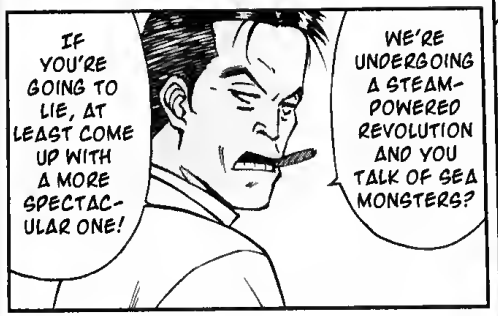


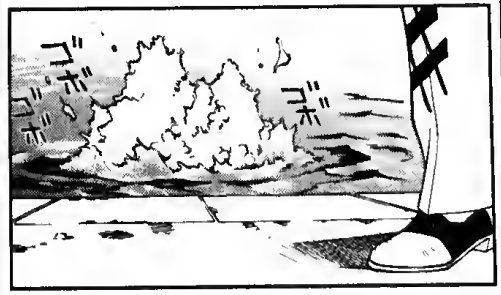


NOT BAD FOR A RANK AMATEUR.
WELL...

WHO ARE THEY CALLING SEA MONSTER?
HOW RUDE.

THE SEA MON-STER!!
AIIIEEE! THERE IT IS!


IF YOU'RE GOING TO LIE, AT LEAST COME UP WITH A MORE SPECTAC-ULAR ONE!
WE'RE UNDERGOING A STEAM-POWERED REVOLUTION AND YOU TALK OF SEA MONSTERS?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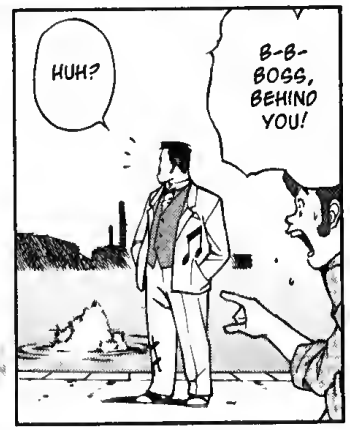
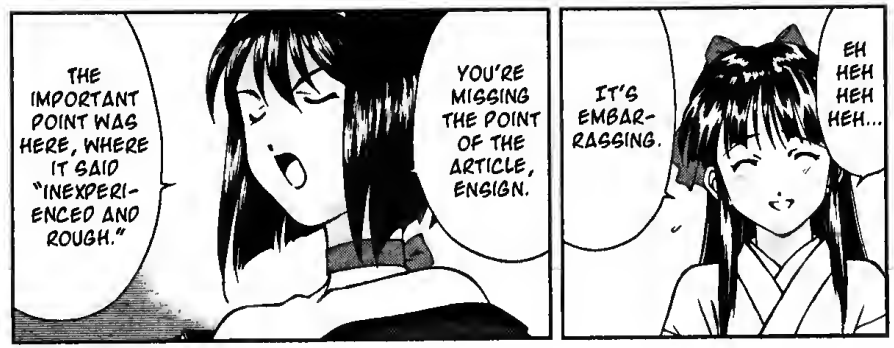
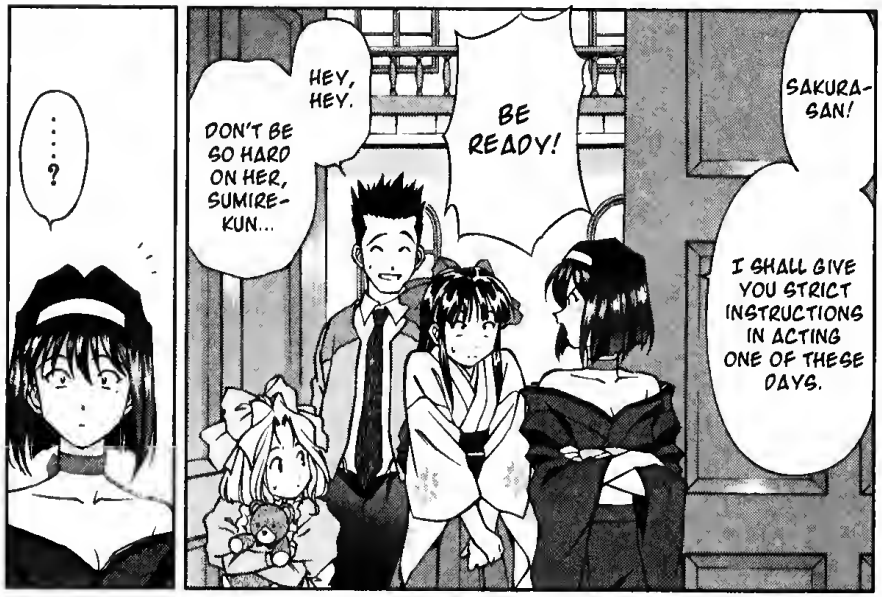
I KNOW YOU DON'T LIKE TO DO MORNING WATCHES, BUT DON'T TELL UNSCIENTIFIC LIES!
TAKE-DA!


HUH?
B-B-BOSS, BEHIND YOU!

WELL, LET'S SEE...
"MISS SAKURA SHINGUJI, WHO WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY SELECTION FOR THE PART OF THE HEROINE, PLAYED THE PART QUITE WELL, WITH PLENTY OF VERVE AND CHARM, IN SPITE OF BEING A BIT INEXPERIENCED AND ROUGH."
"HER SHINING ENTHUSIASM AND FRESHNESS CONVINCED THIS REPORTER THAT A NEW STAR HAS BEEN BORN AT THE IMPERIAL THEATER."

THAT'S A GREAT REVIEW, SAKURA-KUN!
"A NEW STAR OF THE IMPERIAL THEATER," IT SAYS.


EH HEH HEH HEH...
IT'S EMBAR-RASSING.
YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT OF THE ARTICLE, ENSIGN.
THE IMPORTANT POINT WAS HERE, WHERE IT SAID "INEXPERI-ENCED AND ROUGH."


SAKURA-SAN!
BE READY!
HEY, HEY.
DON'T BE SO HARD ON HER, SUMIRE-KUN...
.....?

I SHALL GIVE YOU STRICT INSTRUCTIONS IN ACTING ONE OF THESE DAYS.
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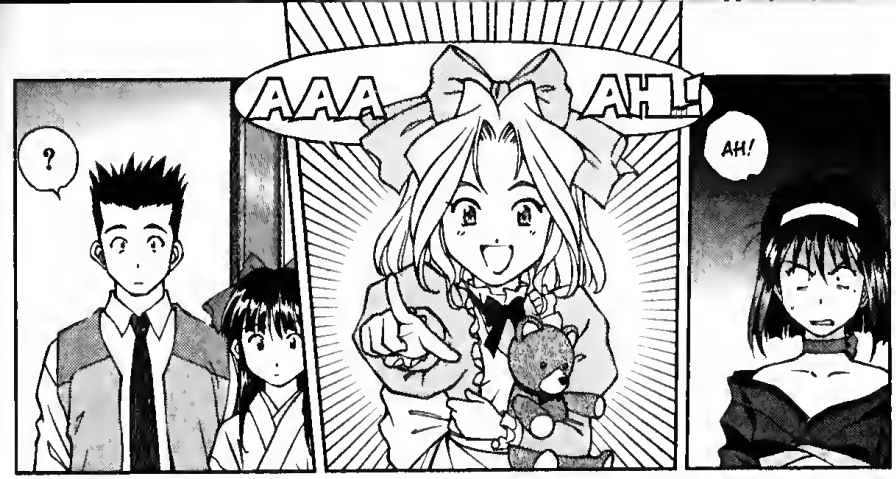

?
AAA
AH!
AH!

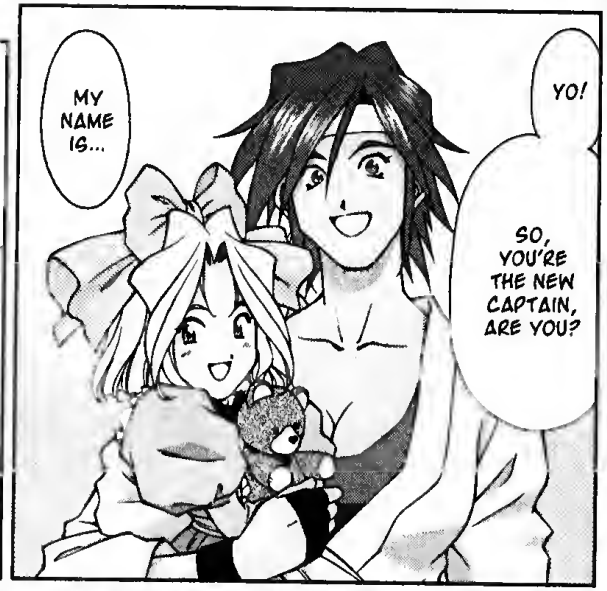
I'M BACK!
YO!

YAAAAY! KANNA! WELCOME BACK!
HA HA HA!
GOOD TO SEE YOU, IRIS!

AND YOU ARE ...?
ER...

ASTONISHINGLY, SHE IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE FLOWER DIVISION.
KANNA KIRISHIMA ...

I'M ICHIRO OGAMI.
KANNA KIRISHIMA, RIGHT?
GOOD TO MEET YOU!

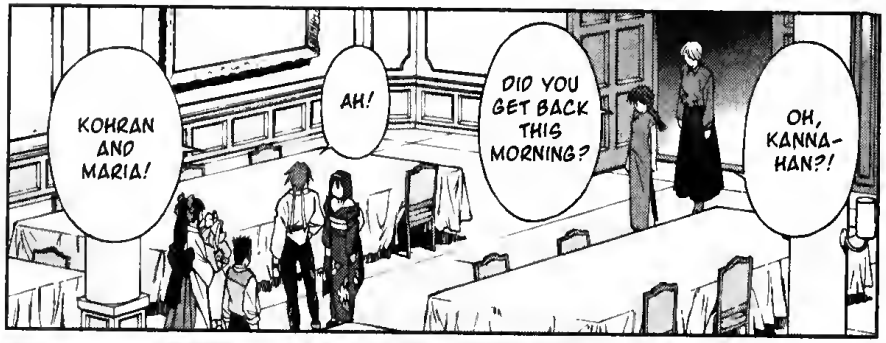

MY NAME IS...
YO!
SO, YOU'RE THE NEW CAPTAIN, ARE YOU?

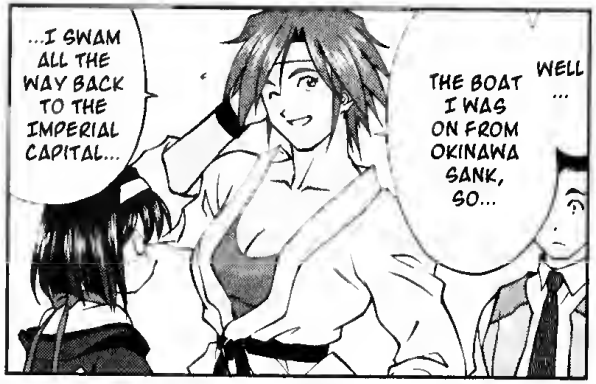
YOU HAD THE MAIN PART IN THE LAST PLAY.
MANAGER TOLD ME.

YOU'RE SAKURA.
SO ...

I'M SAKURA SHINGUJI.
IT'S A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU!
SHE'S A NEW MEMBER OF THE FLOWER DIVISION!
THIS IS SAKURA.
HERE, HERE KANNA!

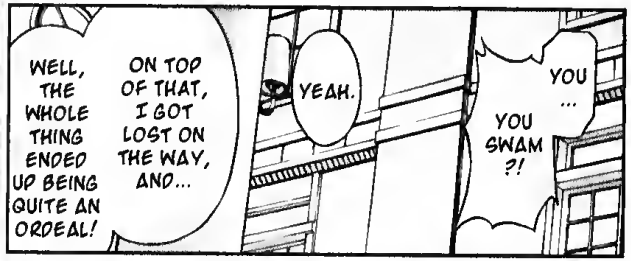
AND SHE GOT GREAT REVIEWS.
UH HUH!


KOHRAN AND MARIA!
AH!
DID YOU GET BACK THIS MORNING?
OH, KANNA-HAN?!


...I SWAM ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL...
WELL...
THE BOAT I WAS ON FROM OKINAWA SANK, SO...

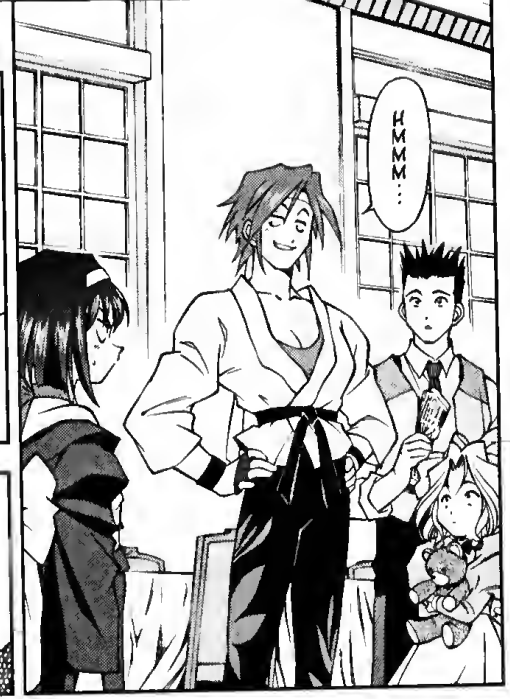
YOU'RE RATHER LATE, AREN'T YOU?
WELCOME BACK, KANNA.

WE'RE ALL MEMBERS OF THE FLOWER DIVISION, SO LET'S GET ALONG.
COME ON NOW, YOU TWO...


WELL, THE WHOLE THING ENDED UP BEING QUITE AN ORDEAL!
ON TOP OF THAT, I GOT LOST ON THE WAY, AND...
YEAH.
YOU...
YOU SWAM?!

WHY DO I HAVE TO PLAY PIRATE KING?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN THE OCEAN AND PLAYED THE PART OF PIRATE KING OR SOMETHING.
HUMPH!

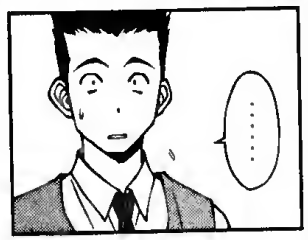
YOU'LL HAVE TO WATCH OUT, SUMIRE!
SO, YOU HAVE A RIVAL NOW.


HMMM...

AND JUST WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT, KANNA-SAN?
HEY.

AH...
UM...
HEY, KNOCK IT OFF, YOU TWO!

HEE HEE HEE...
YOUR POSITION AS THE TOP STAR OF THE IMPERIAL MAY BE IN DANGER SOON!
YOU THINK I WOULD HAVE TROUBLE AGAINST SUCH AN AMATEUR?

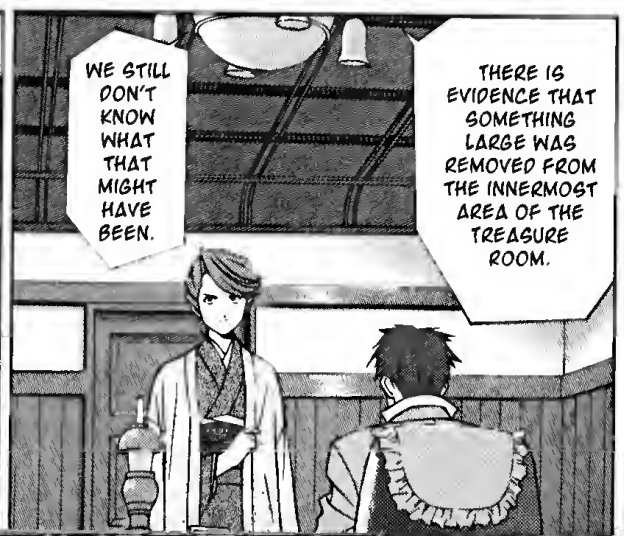

.....

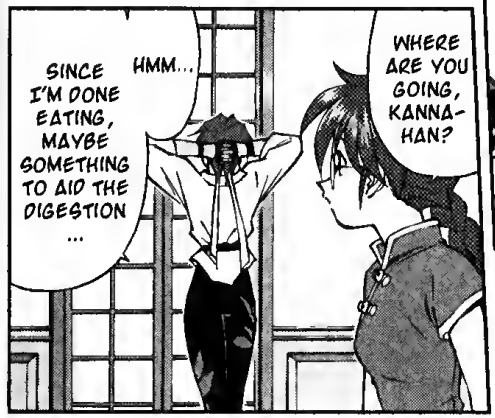
...HAIR?!
THE GREAT PRIEST TENKAI'S ...

DID YOU SEE ANY-THING ELSE?
AND?

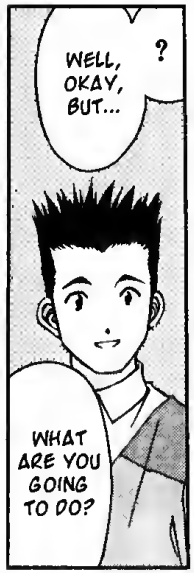
BUT BY THE TIME WE GOT THERE TO INVESTI-GATE, IT HAD BEEN STOLEN ALREADY.
KANEI TEMPLE'S MOHATSU TOWER IS WHERE TENKAI'S HAIR WAS ENSHRINED.
YES.

CONTINUE WITH THE INVESTI-GATION.
GOOD WORK.
YES, SIR!


WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.
THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT SOMETHING LARGE WAS REMOVED FROM THE INNERMOST AREA OF THE TREASURE ROOM.


HMM...
SINCE I'M DONE EATING, MAYBE SOMETHING TO AID THE DIGESTION ...
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, KANNA-HAN?

HUMPH!

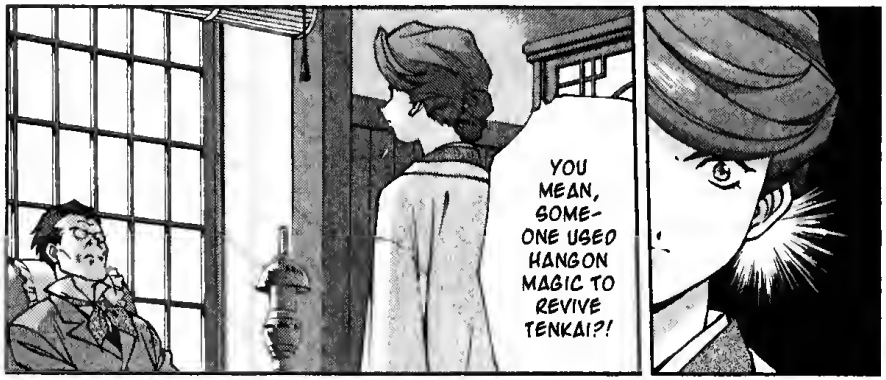

WELL, OKAY, BUT...
?
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

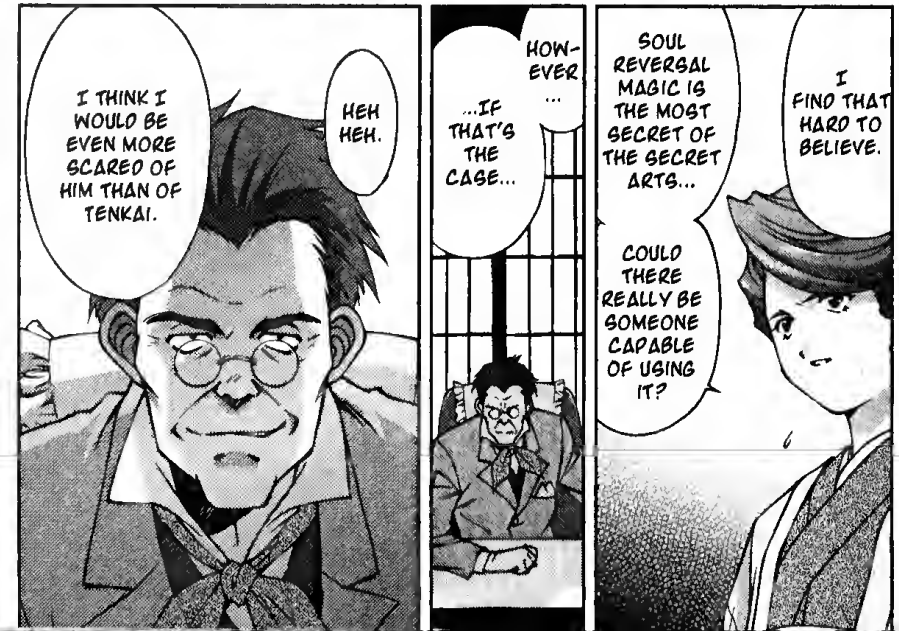
AH, CAPTAIN !
WOULD YOU MIND JOINING ME?

WELL, SINCE THE CAPTAIN SAID SO, I GUESS I GOTTA DO IT.
I'M OUTTA HERE.

HEH HEH HEH...

WITH A SINGLE STRAND OF HAIR...
...ONE CAN BRING THE DEAD BACK TO LIFE.


YOU MEAN, SOMEONE USED HANGON MAGIC TO REVIVE TENKAI?!


I THINK I WOULD BE EVEN MORE SCARED OF HIM THAN OF TENKAI.
HEH HEH.
HOWEVER...
...IF THAT'S THE CASE...
SOUL REVERSAL MAGIC IS THE MOST SECRET OF THE SECRET ARTS...
COULD THERE REALLY BE SOMEONE CAPABLE OF USING IT?
I FIND THAT HARD TO BELIEVE.

HE WAS A CHANCELLOR FOR IEYASU TOKUGAWA, WASN'T HE?
THE GREAT PRIEST TENKAI...

ﾃﾞﾃﾞﾝ...
.....

HE WAS THE ONE WHO DESIGNED EDO TO BE A SPIRITUALLY SECURE CITY.
TENKAI NANKOUBO, THE DARK-ROBED CHANCELLOR.
RIGHT.

...THIS'LL BE A PAIN IN THE ASS.
IF HE IS THE HEAD OF KURONOSU COUNCIL...

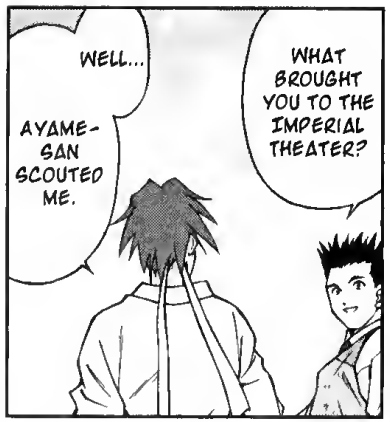
Phew

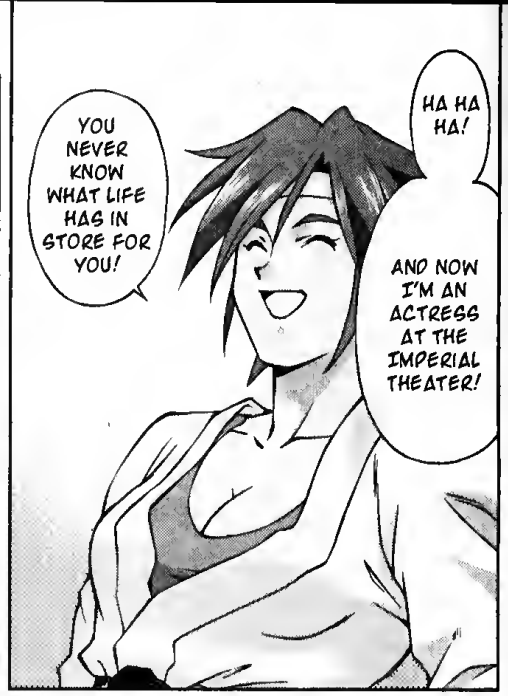
THE PERSON WHO WAS AT THE HELM OF THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE WAS TENKAI HIMSELF.
HIS BEING A SUBJECT OF IEYASU IS ONLY A FRONT.
IN REALITY, THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE WAS A PUPPET IN THE HANDS OF TENKAI.

HE LIVED OVER THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.
BUT, THE GREAT PRIEST TENKAI? HOW COULD THAT BE?

HERE COMES UPPER ROLLING KICK!!
YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD!
I DIDN'T MEAN TO REALLY KICK YOU.
EEP! WHOOPS!

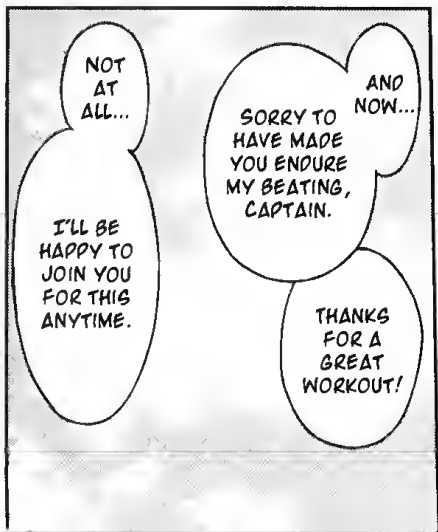
DOWN!
UP!
GOT IT!
FRONT CENTER!
NEXT...

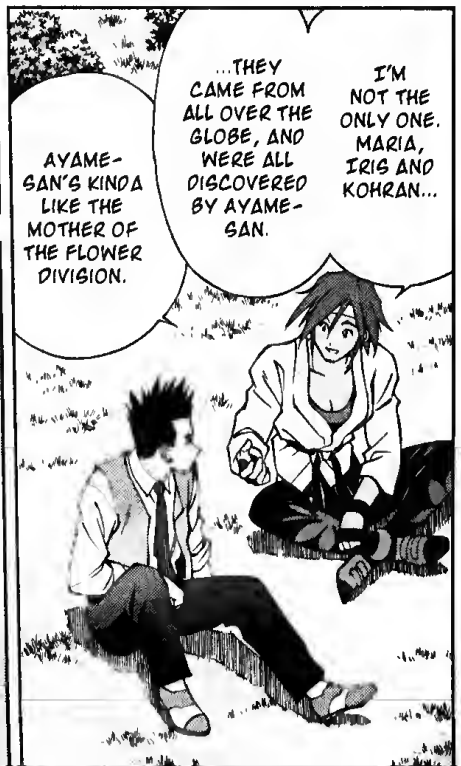

WELL...
AYAME-SAN SCOUTED ME.
WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO THE IMPERIAL THEATER?


HA HA HA!
YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT LIFE HAS IN STORE FOR YOU!
AND NOW I'M AN ACTRESS AT THE IMPERIAL THEATER!

AYAME-SAN?

.....


NOT AT ALL...
I'LL BE HAPPY TO JOIN YOU FOR THIS ANYTIME.
AND NOW...
SORRY TO HAVE MADE YOU ENDURE MY BEATING, CAPTAIN.
THANKS FOR A GREAT WORKOUT!

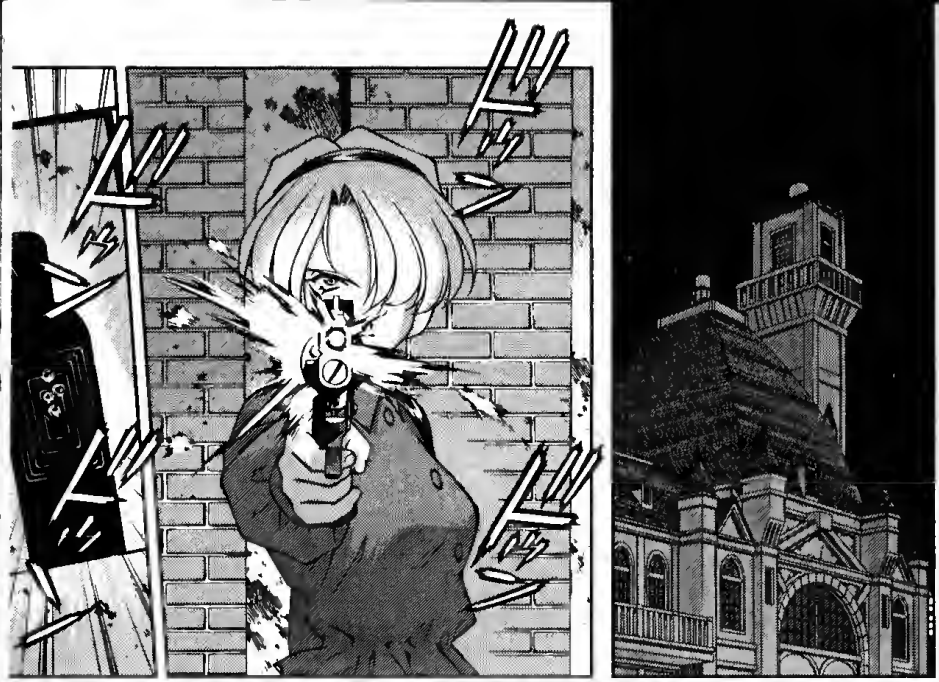

AYAME-SAN'S KINDA LIKE THE MOTHER OF THE FLOWER DIVISION.
...THEY CAME FROM ALL OVER THE GLOBE, AND WERE ALL DISCOVERED BY AYAME-SAN.
I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE. MARIA, IRIS AND KOHRAN...

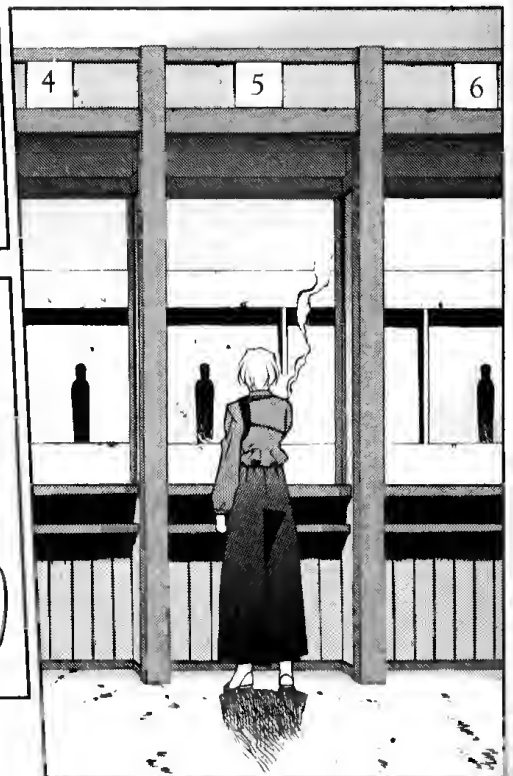
AH, NO... IT'S REALLY NOTHING.
I GOT CARRIED AWAY.
SORRY, CAPTAIN.

FROM DAWN TO DUSK, TRAINING, AND THEN MORE TRAINING.
AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, ALL I EVER DID WAS KARATE.
MY FATHER WAS A MASTER OF RYUKYU KARATE.
NO WONDER YOU BEAT ME.
WOW...

HONESTLY, I WAS A BIT SURPRISED.
BUT KANNA, YOU'RE QUITE GOOD.

'CAUSE I'M A GIRL, YOU MEAN?
HEE HEE HEE!




4
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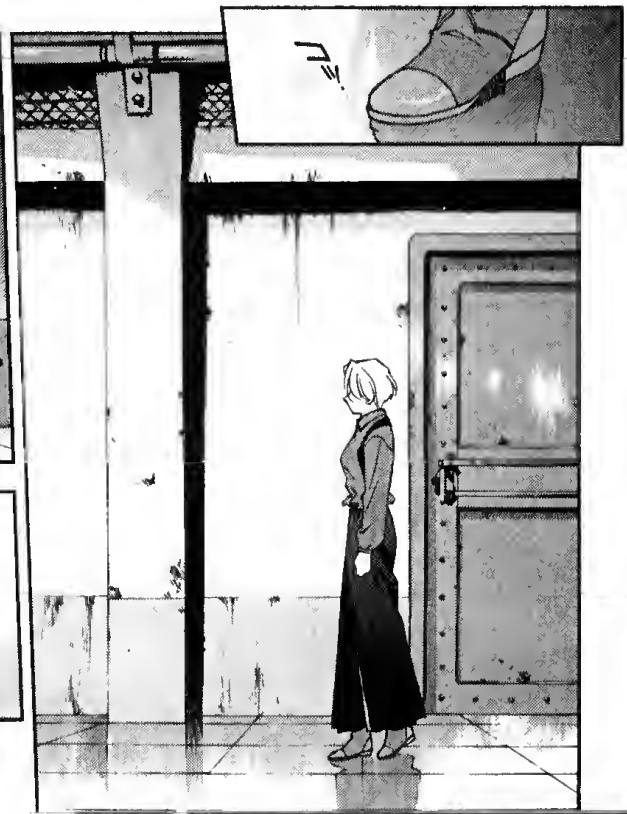
6

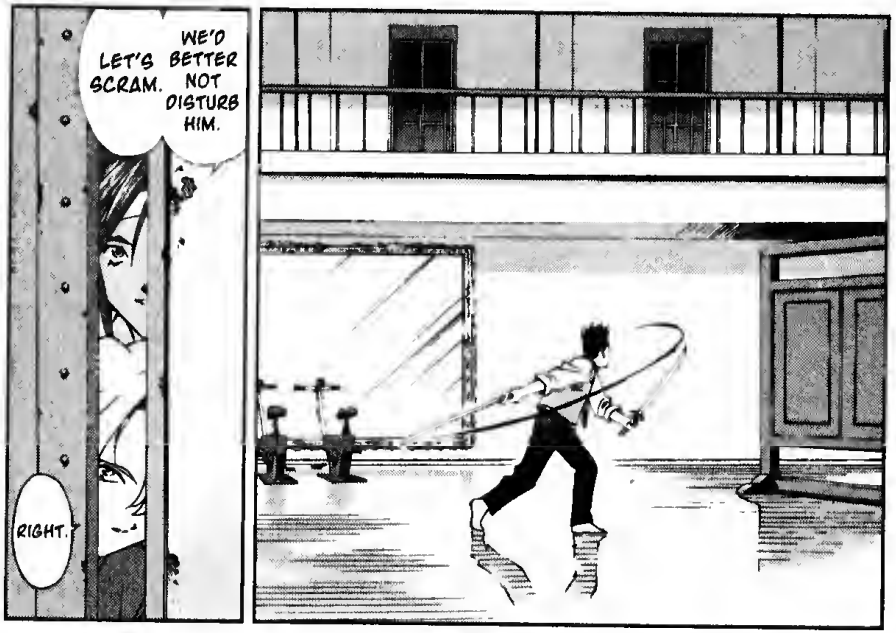
I'M COUNTING ON YOU!
YUP.
THANKS, CAPTAIN.
I WON'T LET YOU DOWN!

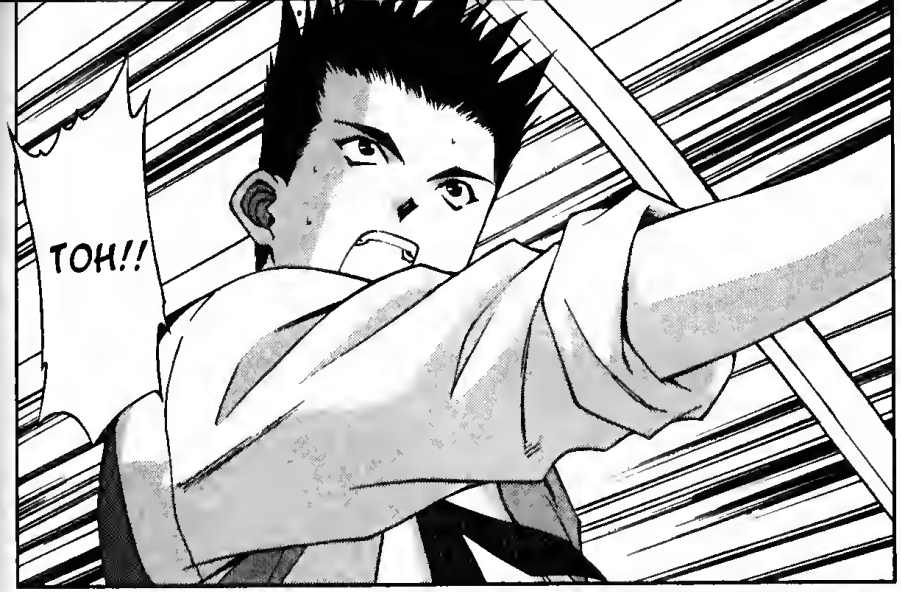
SEI!!

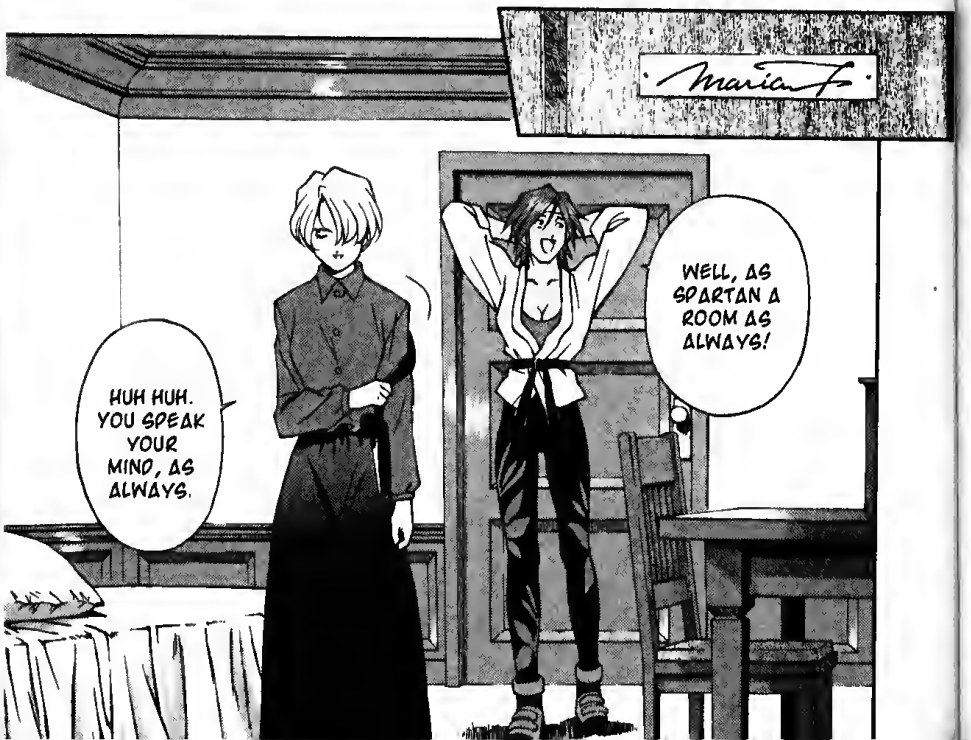
Sei!
Tou!

?




LET'S SCRAM.
WE'D BETTER NOT DISTURB HIM.
RIGHT.

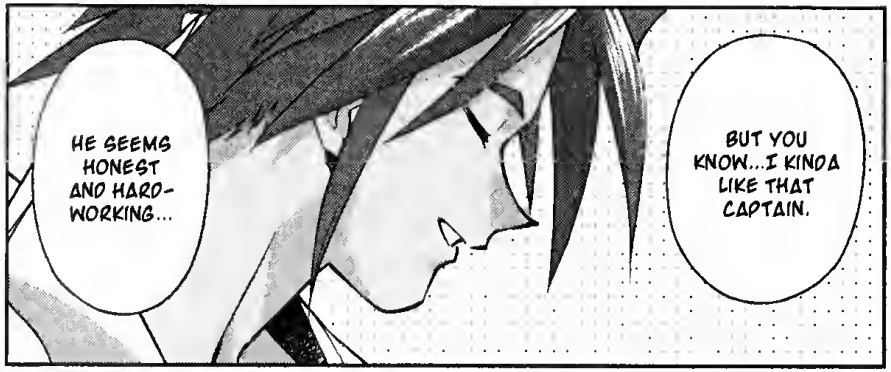

TOH!!

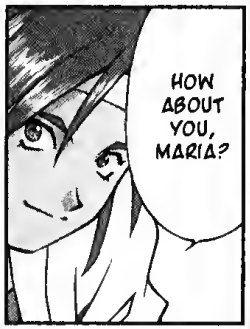

Maria
WELL, AS SPARTAN A ROOM AS ALWAYS!
HUH HUH. YOU SPEAK YOUR MIND, AS ALWAYS.

SHH!
HEY, MARIA...

BEATS ME. I JUST MET HIM TODAY.
HMM?

KAN-NA...
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT CAPTAIN OF OURS?


HE SEEMS HONEST AND HARD-WORKING...
BUT YOU KNOW...I KINDA LIKE THAT CAPTAIN.


HOW ABOUT YOU, MARIA?

I SEE...

BUT YOU KNOW, I WAS KINDA SURPRISED WHEN I GOT BACK.
HAVING A MAN AS CAPTAIN FOR THE FLOWER DIVISION AND ALL.
YES.
SO MARIA, YOU'RE SECOND IN COMMAND NOW.

BUT I FEEL BETTER WHEN YOU'RE HERE.
I'M SO GLAD YOU'VE RETURNED, KANNA.

HEE HEE HEE.
STOP IT. YOU'RE EMBARRAS-SING ME.

.....

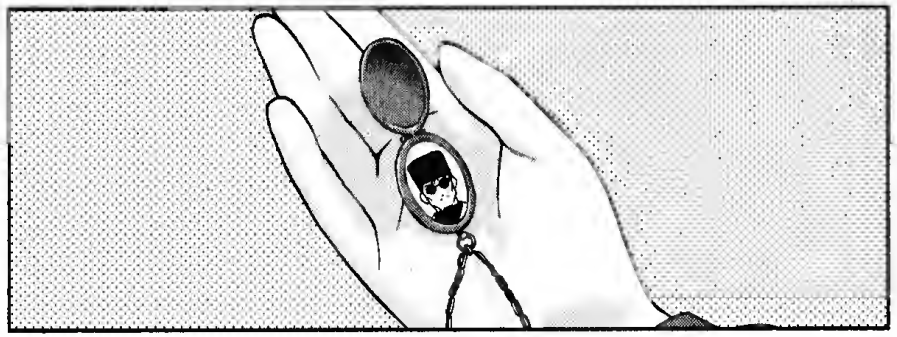
I'M GLAD TO HEAR IT.
I SEE.
TO BE HONEST, I WAS A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT THAT.

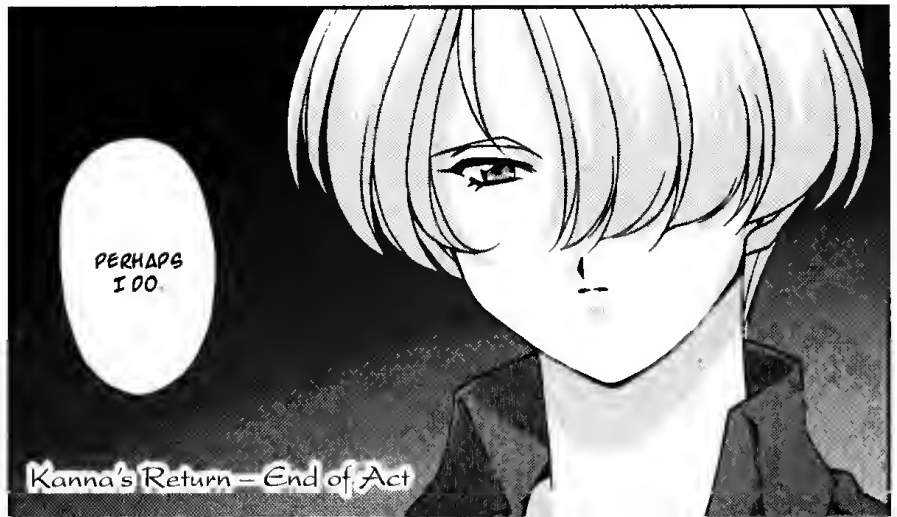
YOU DON'T MIND?

WELL ...
I'VE NEVER REALLY BEEN THE TYPE TO GIVE ORDERS.

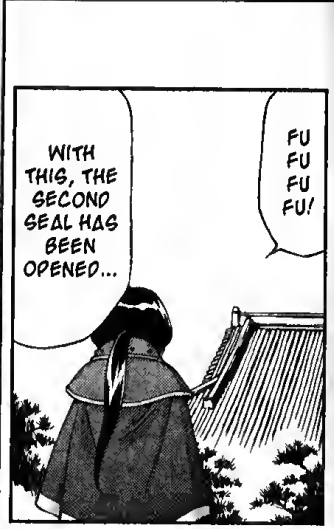
さくら&アイリス&カンナ
Sakura &
Iris & Kanna

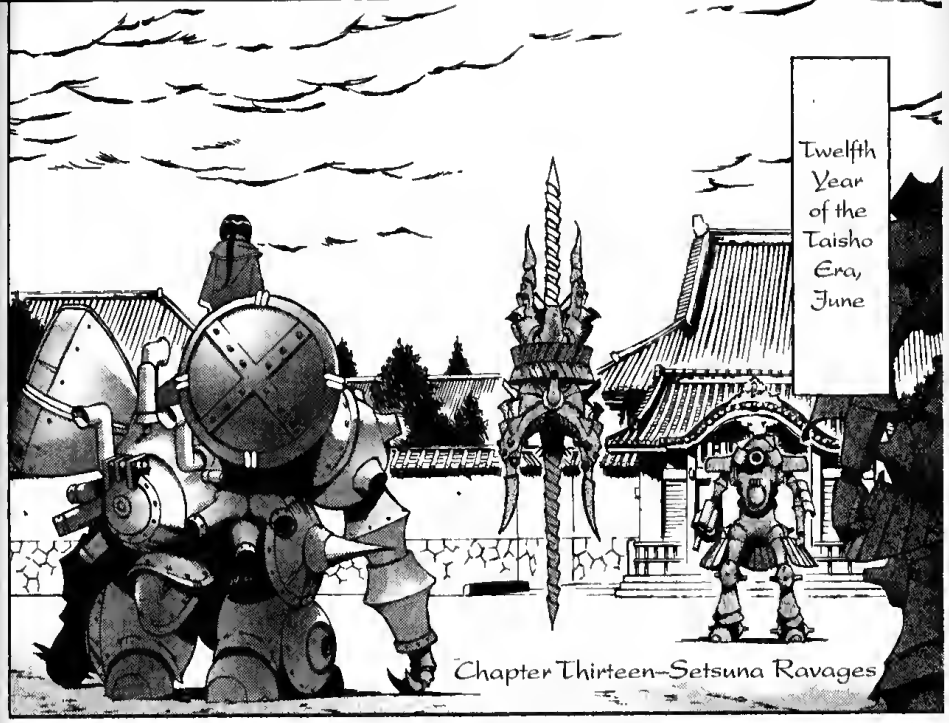
I STILL DON'T KNOW...
...WHETHER I SHOULD ACCEPT HIM AS MY CAPTAIN OR NOT.
AH.
WELL, YOU DO HAVE HIGH STAN-DARDS, MARIA.
I SUP-POSE SO.



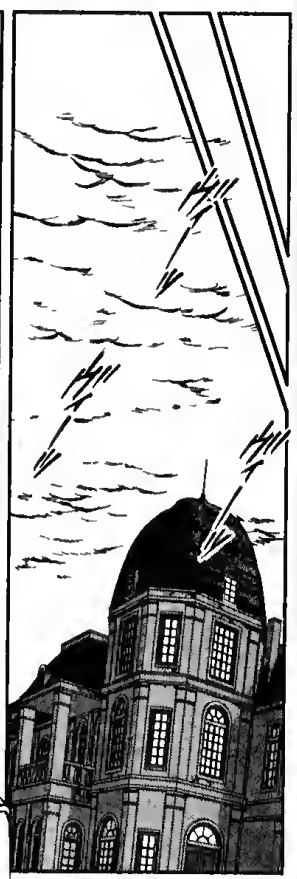

PERHAPS I DO.
Kanna's Return – End of Act

NOW...
I SHALL WREAK HAVOC!

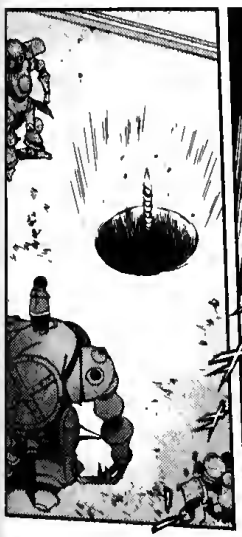

FU FU FU FU!
WITH THIS, THE SECOND SEAL HAS BEEN OPENED...


Twelfth Year of the Taisho Era, June
Chapter Thirteen–Setsuna Ravages

SPIRIT-OPERATED MACHINE SOLDIERS HAVE APPEARED NEAR TSUKIJI HONGANJI TEMPLE.
IMPERIAL FIGHTING TROUPE TO PROCEED IMMEDIATELY AND DESTROY THE ENEMY!

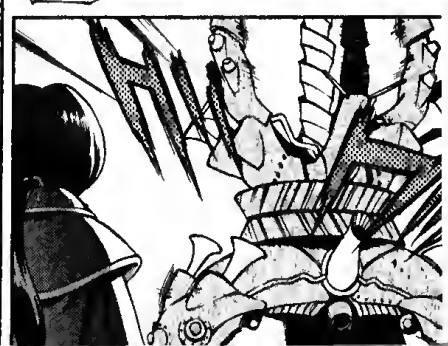


HUT!

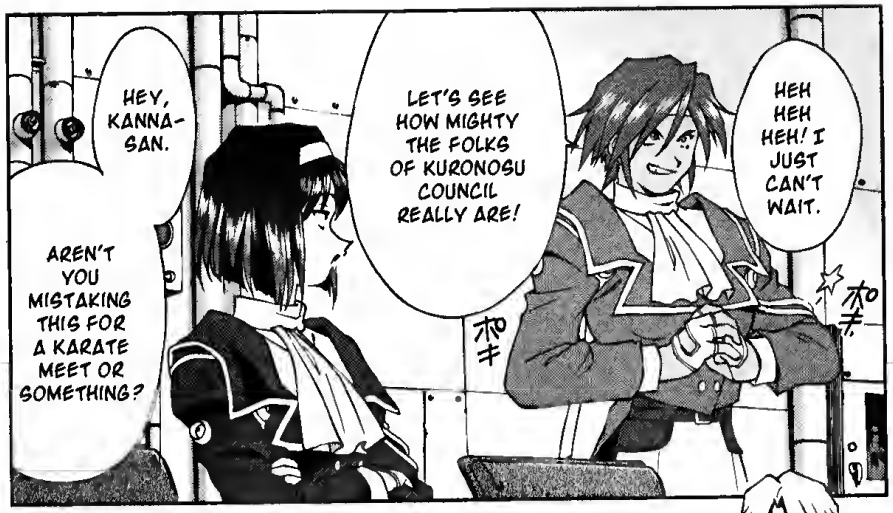


ズゥゥゥ…

ONKI-RIKIRI BASARA UNBAT-TAH
ONKI-RIKIRI BASARA UNBAT-TAH
ONKI-RIKIRI BASARA UNBAT-TAH



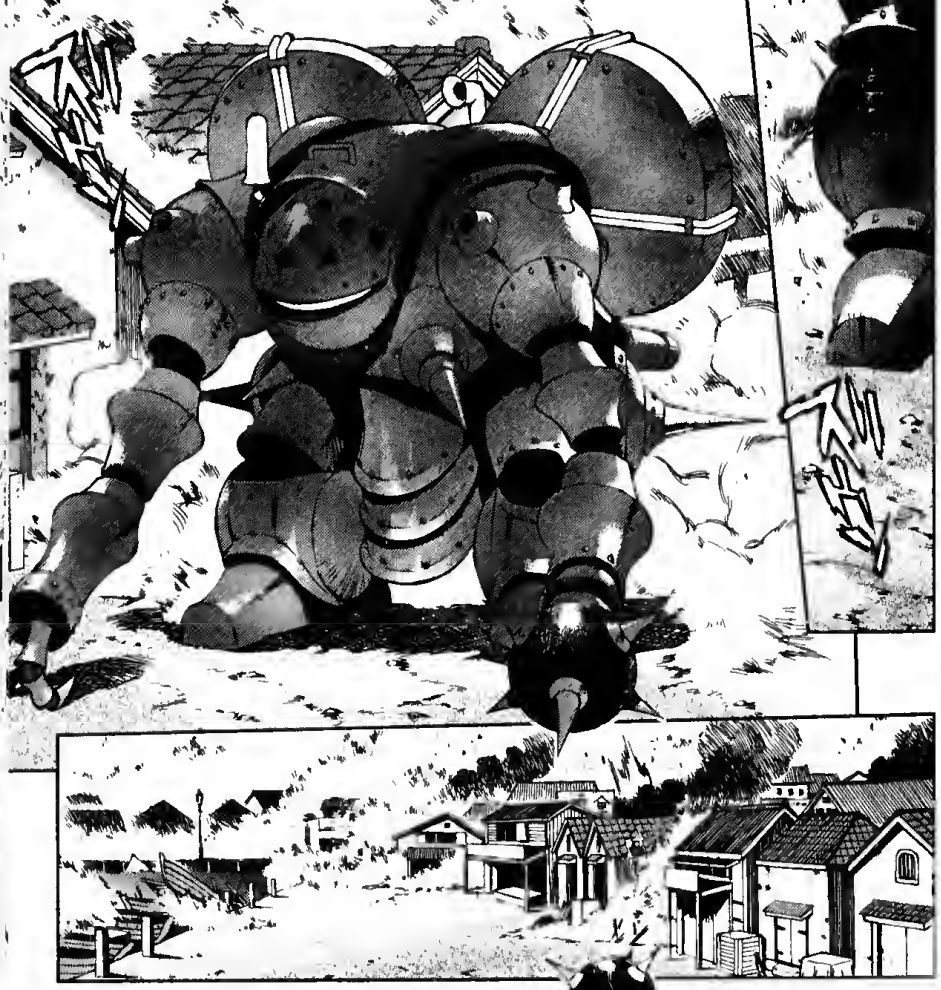
TARGET, TSUKIJI!!
IMPERIAL FIGHTING TROUPE, GO FORTH!


HEH HEH HEH! I JUST CAN'T WAIT.
LET'S SEE HOW MIGHTY THE FOLKS OF KURONOSU COUNCIL REALLY ARE!
HEY, KANNA-SAN.
AREN'T YOU MISTAKING THIS FOR A KARATE MEET OR SOMETHING?

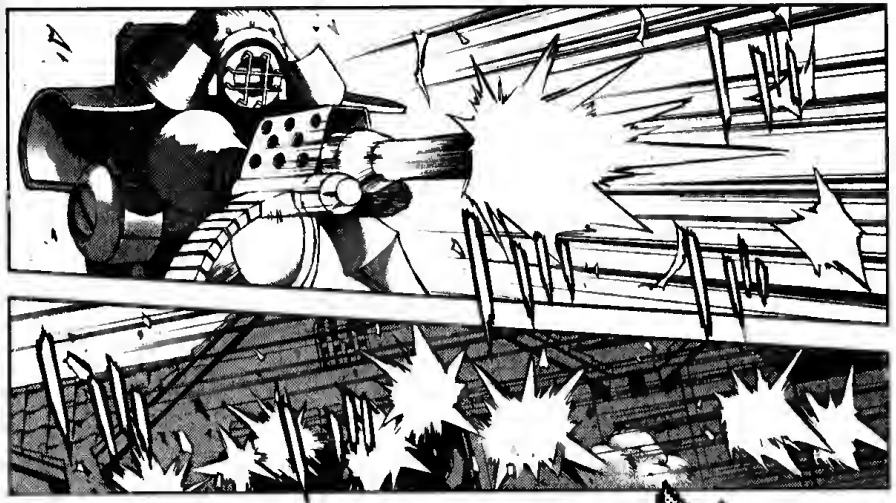
HOW BORING!
I HAVE TO STAY BEHIND AGAIN?!
JUST A BIT MORE PATIENCE.
I NEED TO MAKE SPECIAL ADJUST-MENTS ON YOUR KOUBU, AND IT TAKES TIME.

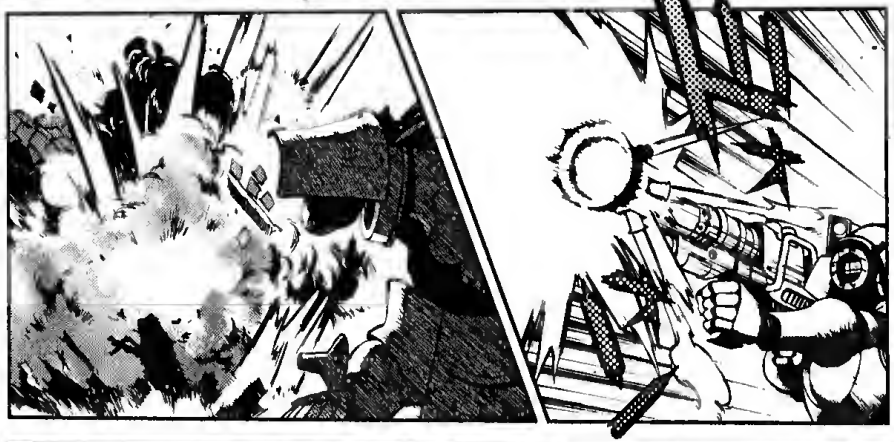
EN-SIGN.
THE DEPLOY-MENT ORDER, SIR!

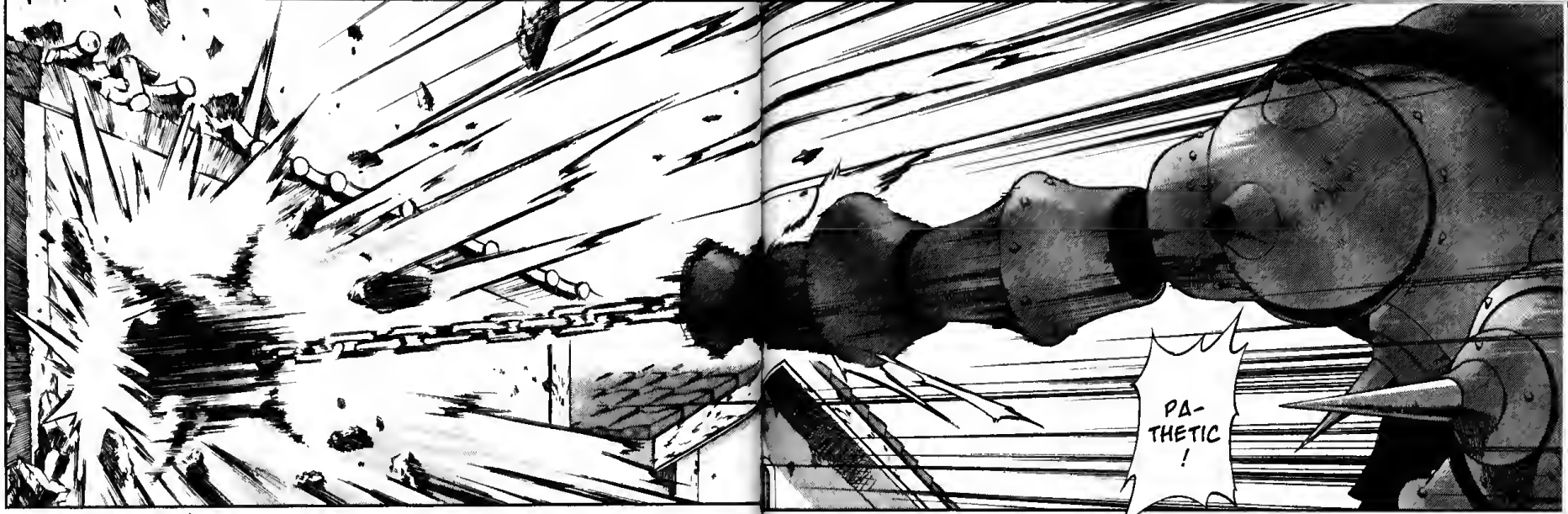
GOOD LUCK, OGAMI-KUN.
WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU.
YE...
YES, SIR!!



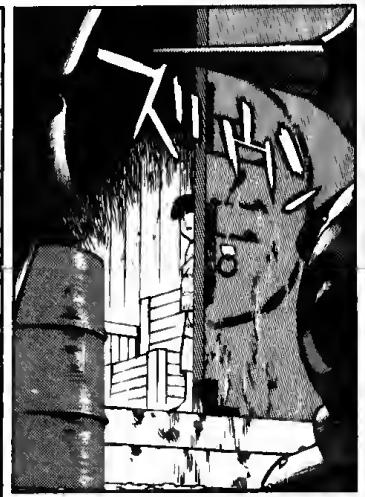
HOW BORING!
AWWW...
AND I WAS SO LOOKING FORWARD TO A SLAUGHTER...
BAH!
EVERYONE'S ESCAPED.






PA-
THETIC
!

EEE!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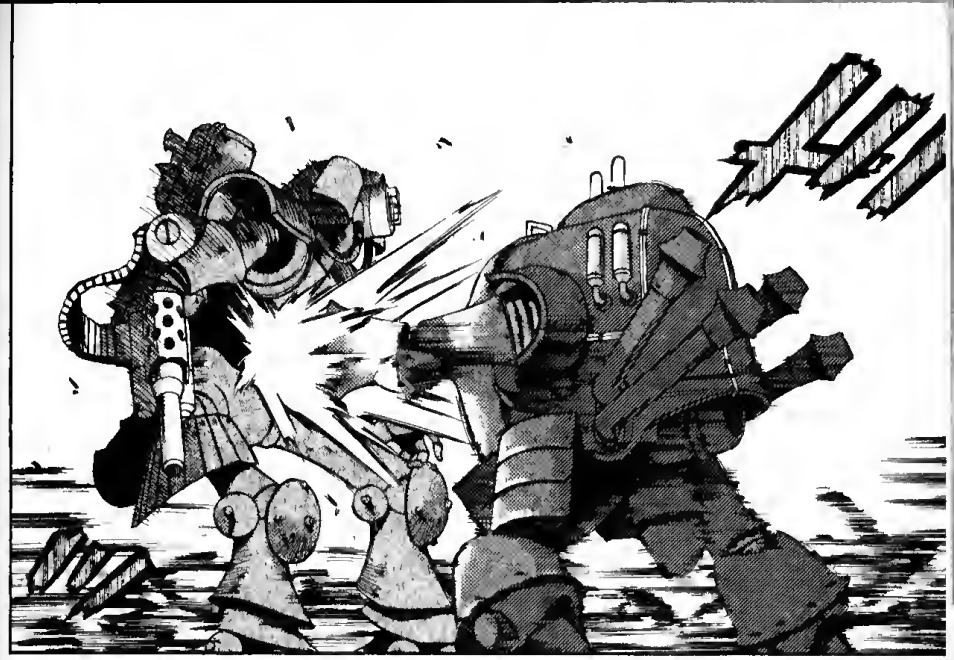
ガラ
HMM...

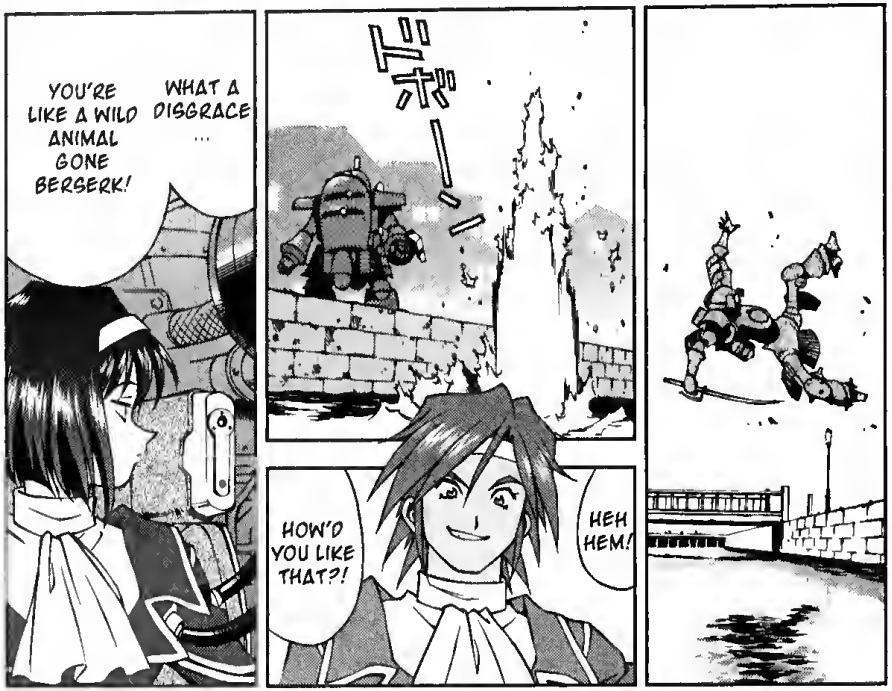
WHAT ?!
IT TOOK YOU SO LONG THAT I GOT BORED WAITING.
AH, YOU DECIDED TO SHOW UP!
...AND COME AND PLAY WITH ME, WON'T YOU?
COME NOW!
HURRY UP AND GET RID OF THE WAKIJI...
...TO HAVE SOME FUN!
I CAN'T WAIT...
ENEMIES WHO DESTROY THE PEACE OF THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL...
...SHALL NOT BE SPARED!!

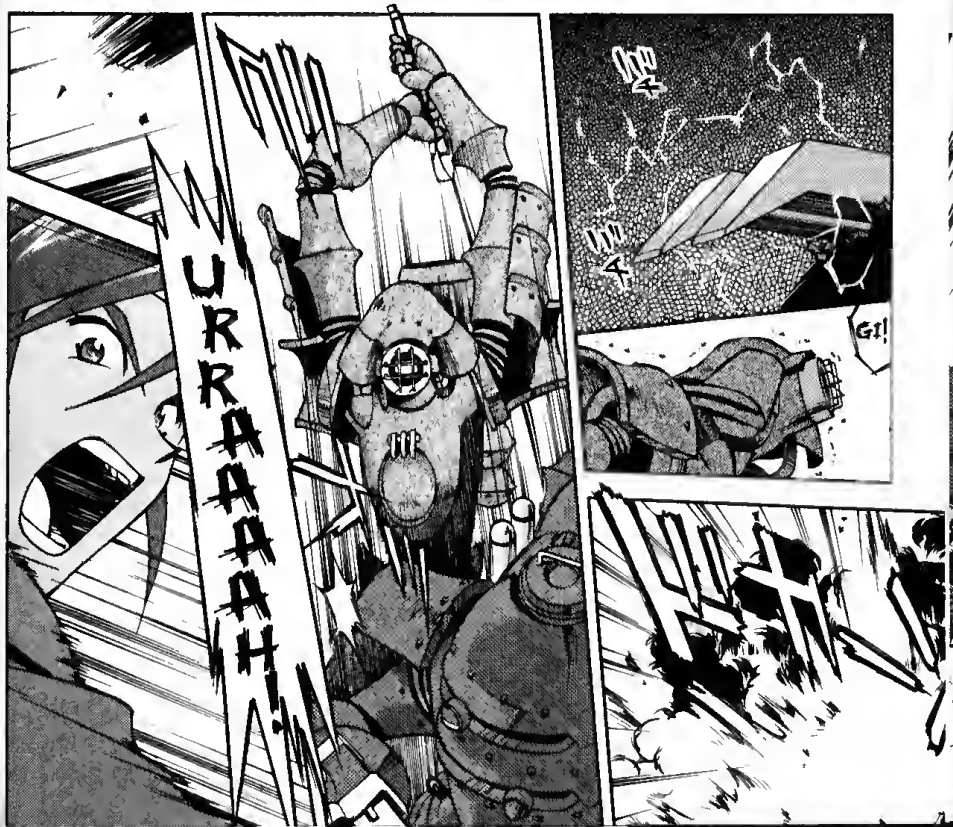
GI!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!!
=ly...
...IS HERE TO SERVE JUSTICE!!
THE IMPERIAL FIGHTING TROUPE...

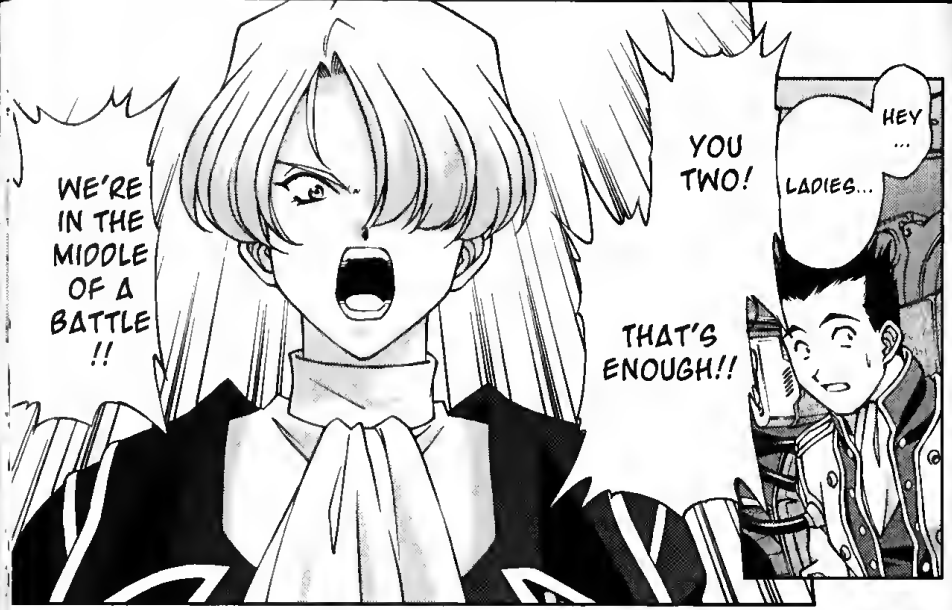
I'LL GET RID OF THESE SMALL FRIES WITH A SINGLE BLOW!
CAPTAIN, LET ME SPEAR-HEAD THE ATTACK!
WHATTA LITTLE PRICK.
TCH!
HEE HEE HEE!
RIGHT ON!
RIGHT. KANNA, THE FIRST SHOT IS ALL YOURS.
GIVE IT YOUR ALL!
KASUMI-KUN, WHAT IS THE EVACUA-TION STATUS OF THE CITIZENS?
NO ONE IS LEFT IN THAT AREA, I BELIEVE.
IT'S ALREADY COM-PLETE, SIR.
AYE, SIR!!
GOT IT?
THE REST OF YOU, FOLLOW KANNA AND TAKE OUT THE WAKIJI INDIVIDUALLY.

THOSE LAME BULLETS WON'T HIT...
HEH!
...SOMEONE LIKE MISS KANNA!!

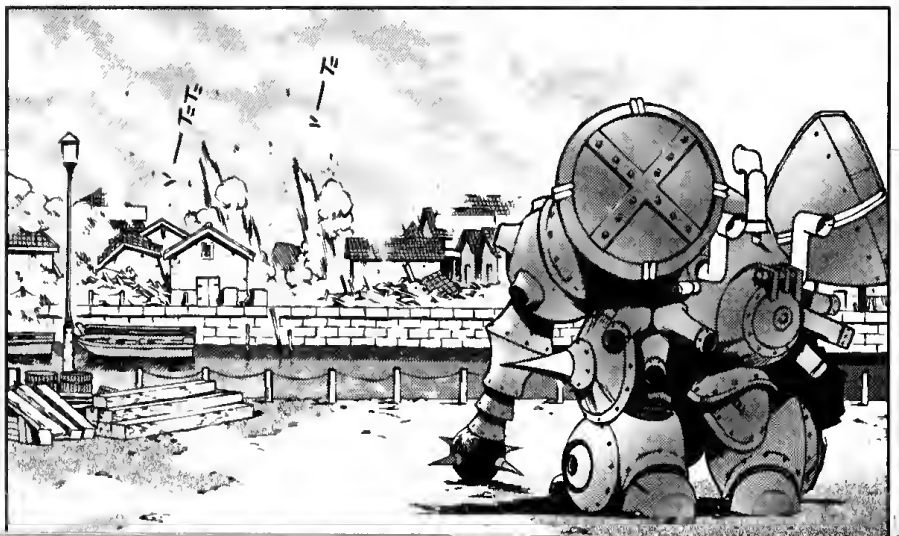



YOU'RE LIKE A WILD ANIMAL GONE BERSERK!
WHAT A DISGRACE ...
ドボーン
HOW'D YOU LIKE THAT?!
HEH HEM!


URRAAAAH
GI!


WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A BATTLE !!
YOU TWO!
THAT'S ENOUGH!!
HEY ...
LADIES...

THANKS
I'M WELL AWARE OF THAT FACT
SHE'S PRETTY SCARY WHEN SHE GETS MAD
SHOOT IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT THAT MARIA'S YELLING AT US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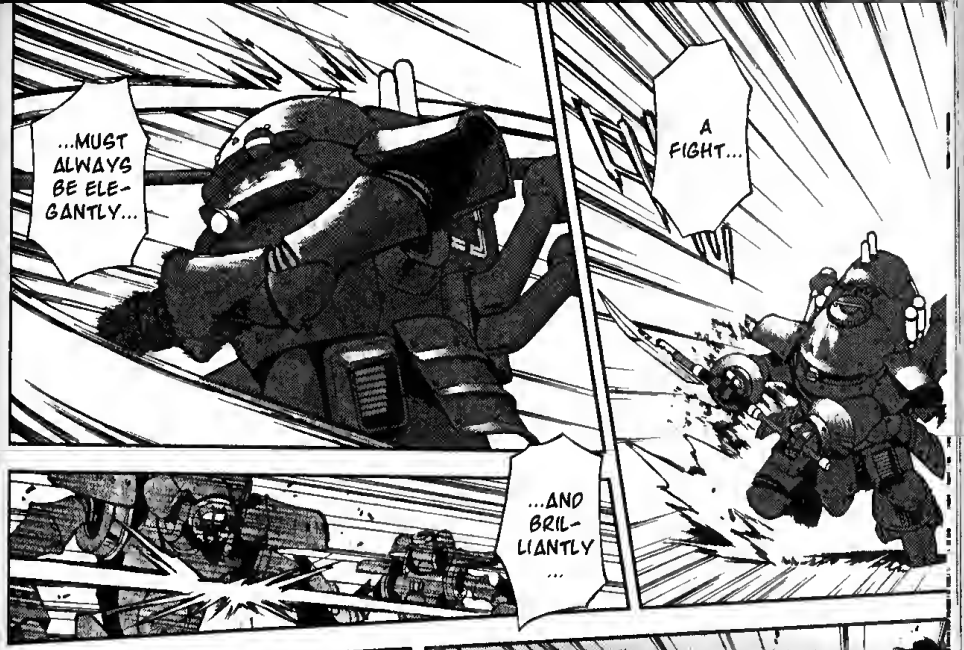
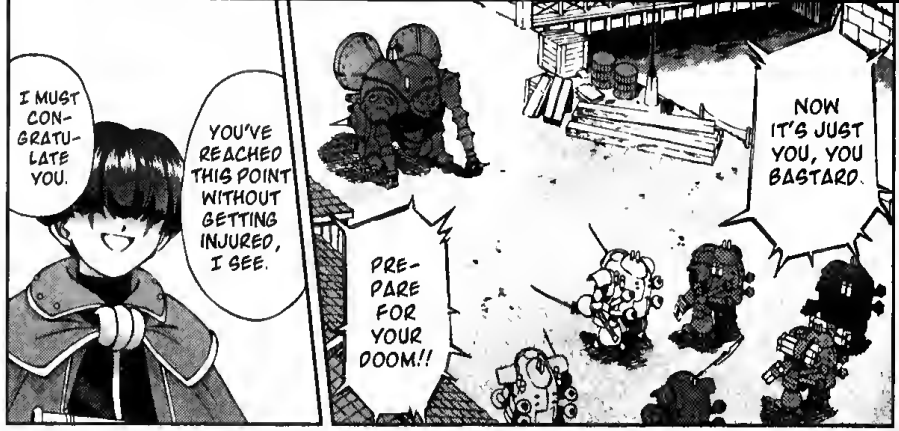

...MUST ALWAYS BE ELE-GANTLY...
A FIGHT...
...AND BRIL-LIANTLY ...

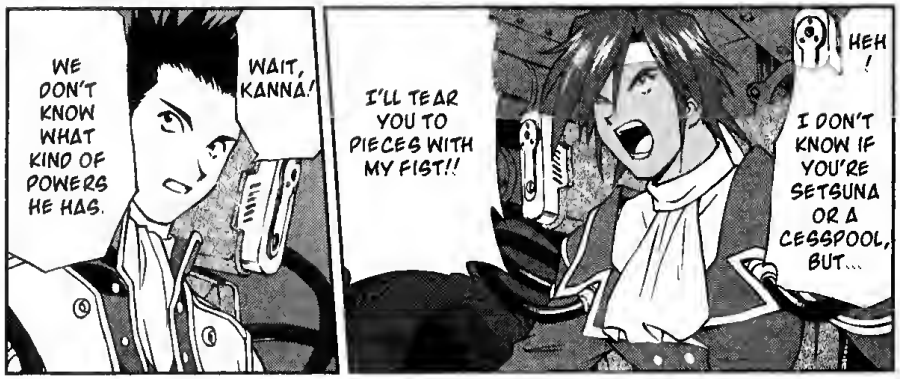
WHAT IS THIS, COLOR GUARD?
WHAT'S SO ELEGANT ABOUT THAT OLD POLE YOU HAVE THERE?
KEH!
WHAT...?! WHY, YOU... SHUT UP, GORILLA WOMAN!

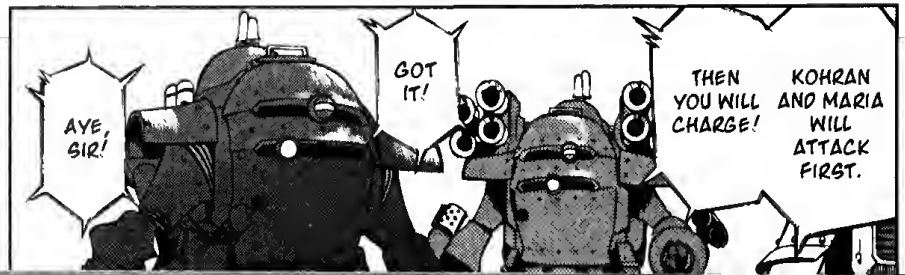
...EXECUTED!

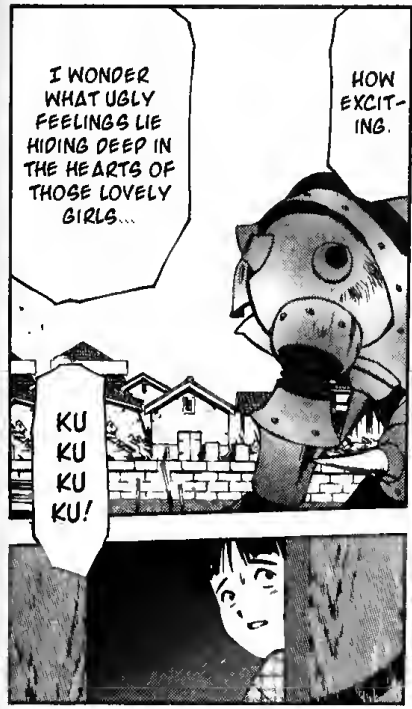
OH, KANNA-SAN, HAVE YOU HAD A GOOD LOOK IN A MIRROR LATELY?
HOW DARE YOU? WHO ARE YOU CALLING A GORILLA?!!

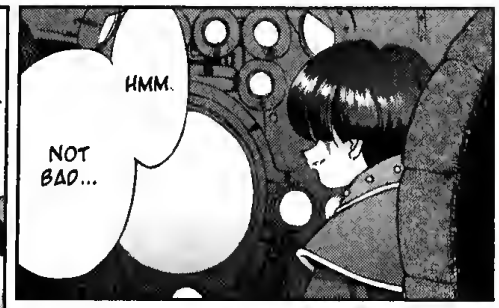

I MUST CONGRATULATE YOU.
YOU'VE REACHED THIS POINT WITHOUT GETTING INJURED, I SEE.
PREPARE FOR YOUR DOOM!!
NOW IT'S JUST YOU, YOU BASTARD.

I AM PALE SETSUNA... ...OF THE KURONOSU COUNCIL!
AS A REWARD, I SHALL TELL YOU MY NAME.

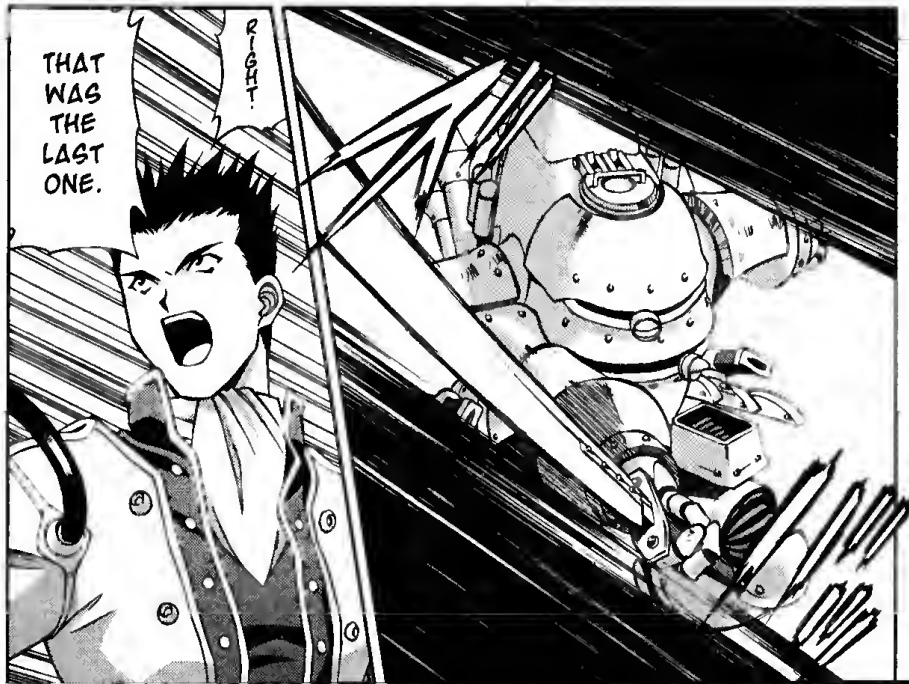

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF POWERS HE HAS.
WAIT, KANNA!
I'LL TEAR YOU TO PIECES WITH MY FIST!!
HEH!
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE SETSUNA OR A CESSPOOL, BUT...


AYE, SIR!
GOT IT!
THEN YOU WILL CHARGE!
KOHRAN AND MARIA WILL ATTACK FIRST.


I WONDER WHAT UGLY FEELINGS LIE HIDING DEEP IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE LOVELY GIRLS...
HOW EXCITING.
KU KU KU KU!


HMM.
NOT BAD...

THOSE MIGHTY STEEL ARMORS CAN'T PROTECT YOUR WEAKLING SOULS...
HOWEVER...
YOU'RE ONLY HUMAN IN THE END.


THAT WAS THE LAST ONE.
RIGHT.

KYAAAA!
MM?

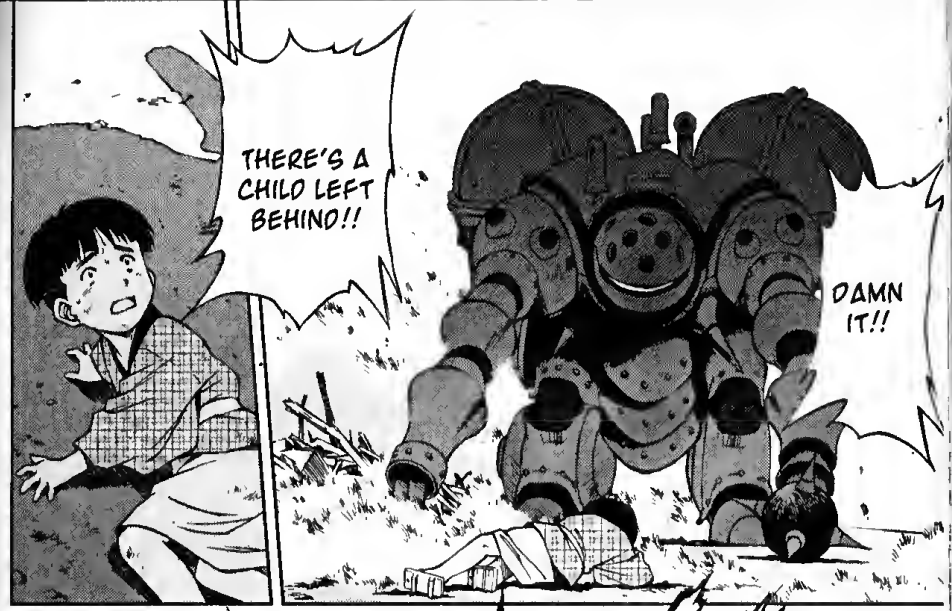
OPEN FIRE!!
ALL RIGHT, HERE GOES!

IT CAN DEFLECT ANY BULLET KNOWN TO MAN!
SUCH FEEBLE ATTACKS WILL DO NOTHING TO DEMON-DRIVEN SOLDIER "SOUKAKU"!
HA HA HA HA!

TCH!

QU-
QUICK! GET OUT OF HERE!!

TO GIVE YOUR OWN LIFE TO SAVE A CHILD!
WHAT A FOOL YOU ARE...
KU KU KU KU!


THERE'S A CHILD LEFT BEHIND!!
DAMN IT!!

STOP IT!!
I'LL TEAR HIM INTO PIECES RIGHT BEFORE YOUR EYES!!
HOW NICE!!
HA HA HA!

マリア・タチバナ

Maria Tachibana

Imaginary history of Taisho. Ichima Shinguji, who sacrificed his life to save the citizens of the Imperial Capital under attack by the kouma, the Fallen Demons. Leaving his family behind...What did his daughter Sakura think about his actions? The Shinguji family is one of the three hidden branch families of the Tokugawa Shogunate. The three families are the descendants of the secret agents who were sent out to the Toyoku, Kyoto and Kyushu areas, calculating that Jeyasu would fail to unify Japan and bring peace to the land. These are special families who have the essence of "bringing the Truth to the world" in their blood. This was the initial setup. I was influenced by Keiichiro Ryu's ***Yoshihara Gomenjo*** [*Letter of Decline to Yoshihara*] and ***Kakuresato Kukaigyo*** [*The training of the harsh world of hidden paradise*], and I'm rather proud of it.

I wrote as if to ride on the strength of this setup.

First, the location is snow-covered Sendai, after the devastation of the Imperial Capital and the military authority's struggle to develop an anti-Kouma weapon (Koubu). Sakura is visiting her father's grave. In her heart, a decision to carry on her father's will: "I shall go to the Imperial Capital. I shall carry on the will of father," she thinks to herself. And the incident that brought rise to her decision...

Suddenly, the heavy iron door opened. Reiko Isomura was standing there. She was holding a plastic tray in her hand with dinner on it.

"You're moving along quite nicely."

A lovely voice. She was quite a beauty. Perhaps her shadowy appearance came from some Slavic blood? Her lower lip was nice and full. She must be quite passionate in bed.

Reiko put down the tray and looked over my shoulder to see what I was writing.

She smelled good.

It was the smell of a perfume, Chanel No. 19. She must be a romantic.

"It's so-so," I answered curtly.

"Let me see," she grabbed the manuscript and started to read.

Reluctantly, I ate dinner. As I ate, I watched Reiko for her reactions. Reiko read the manuscript seriously, tilting her head from time to time. And after she finished the last page, she said, "No good," and crumpled up the manuscript.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing?!" I yelled out, reacting to her sudden gesture.

The memories of twenty years ago came back. When I took my manuscript to T Publishing, the editor said, "Utterly boring. No one reads fantasy in Japan!" And then he crushed my precious manuscript. I was so angry, I felt the blood in my body flow backward. I thought about punching the guy out, but knew that if I did, I would be blacklisted in the publishing world, I won't be able to work. That much I understood. Even though he might negate my entire existence now, if I write something good and it becomes a hit, his opinion would completely reverse overnight. That much I understood. But it was still vexing.

"Write the same plot as the game," Reiko told me.

"What?"

I was still in a daze. I wondered how many hours I had been out since I was made to inhale the drug. No, perhaps it had been days...

Suddenly I was cold. I know I have stamina, but this is much too cold for anything. I looked around. The room, surrounded by bare concrete walls, was about the size of ten tatami mats. I saw a cot, a desk, a table lamp, some writing paper and a writing instrument placed by one of the walls. The only source of heat in the room was a small electric stove. I saw white snow being blown against the glass of a small window in the upper part of the wall.

I remembered that Reiko Isomura, who had kidnapped me and locked me up here, had said that she was a "Special Carrespondent for Siberia."

For real? Is this really Siberia?

I tried to sort everything out in my very muddled head.

In any case, what those guys are after is the manuscript for "manga version of Sakura Taisen." If I finish it, they'll let me out of here. Since their aim is to have me write, they wouldn't harm me. A sense of calm returned to me.

I wanted to get out of there quickly. To get out, I had to write the script. As I decided on my course of action, all there was to do was to do it. I sat in front of the desk and started writing at light speed.

"Hmm?"

After scratching a few lines, I actually looked carefully at what was on the desk.

Writing paper from Ginza Itoya, Mitsubishi High Uni pencils, and Tombo MONO erasers – my beloved writing instruments! They went out of their way to be nice. I found this discovery rather amusing.

Several hours later, I realized that all I could hear was the sound of the pencil sliding against the writing paper. I was experiencing the kind of concentration uncommonly experienced in these modern times. Many scenes and lines came flowing into my head. I wrote as if to scoop up those images and words out of my head.

Bonus Section

Third Installment

Cherry Blossoms Flourish in Otowa

By Ohji Hiroi

Maria and Me

Samsara: to go or pass through states, to wander. *Déjà vu*: a feeling that you've experienced a scene before. Sorry about the abruptness, but these are the words that come to mind when I think of the character Maria. I've known her a long time now. Memories from Russia and events that took place in New York... her memories before she joined the Flower Division come to me in pieces as if they actually took place. I cannot help but think how lucky I am to have been able to play a single character for such a long time. When I first began working as a voice talent, I often thought how strange and embarrassing it was that these characters, who I've never known, would speak with my voice. When I am playing Maria, I always ask her, "How would you do it?" She answers with a pleasant smile, and tries to speak without making eye contact. My telepathy ends there, a faraway memory. "The answer is always within you." A voice comes out of nowhere, and I look around. But I find only a gentle wind blowing there. I regain myself. Was it me, or was it her voice? A comfortable chaos. If I ever visit Russia, I may well think, "I've been here before..."

Urara Takano
playing
Maria Tachibana

"Not, 'what.' I said, do not write an original manga, but write something that is faithful to the plot of the game."

"But..."

"It's going against your pride as a writer...right? But you're also an entertainer, aren't you? You don't wish to be remembered 100 years later as a writer, do you? Something fun for the moment, something that makes the reader forget reality for the moment, isn't that what you're all about?"

How dare she? It really got on my nerves, but she was right. There are two kinds of writers: one that stubbornly protects his pathetic worlds in a kind of mental masturbation, and the other who endeavors to sweep up the readers' feelings and dance with them. The former is the literary writer and the latter is the popular writer.

"A train arrives at Ueno station, and Sakura is standing in Ueno Park. The Wakiji are on a rampage. Sakura takes out her sword. It's a great opening. Listen, you connect the plot of the game and when some feeling seems unnatural, you take out the original script as the trump card. When all the members of the Imperial Fighting Troupe are assembled, you can write things that weren't covered in the game, like their pasts, as separate episodes."

Before I knew it, I was drawn to Reiko's words, taking notes.

"Kodansha's Special Correspondent for Siberia is also an editor, I see..."

"When you take care of as many writers as I have, you begin to see things. But perhaps I overstepped my mark..."

"You played the game...Sakura Taisen."

"Uh huh. It was a lot of fun. To be honest, I wasn't sure in the beginning, but I was totally absorbed. It's a little embarrassing, but I certainly never dreamed I would cry playing a game. So, what I want to see is the development of the plot, just like the game, but with some enrichment of the atmosphere of the era and the nature of the characters."

Reiko's eyes were sparkling brightly.

"Then the main character must be Ichiro Ogami. But then Ogami's character has to be developed."

"I like it. That's what separates the manga from the game."

Reiko smiled. It was a great smile, a smile that makes you want to work.

"I'll write it."

I put down my dinner and began to write.

It was in 1995. Memories of a story called "Sakura Taisen Memos" came back to me vividly. This was when I was just beginning to write the battles of young women in the Taisho Era, not yet read by anyone...

To be continued in the next volume.

KICK THE KITTY